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This study compares the sound systems of Cree and English, with special attention given to identifying the differences between the two systems which are likely to cause interference or confusion. Specific teaching suggestions are provided for those who are teaching the English sound system to students who are more familiar with the Cree system. Facial diagrams illustrating the oral production of difficult sounds and suggestions for making drill sessions interesting are included with each drill. The pronunciation drill is described in some detail in the section "Teaching the Voicing Distinction." A technical knowledge of linguistics is not assumed on the part of the reader. (AMM)

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FROM CREE TO ENGLISH

Part One: The Sound System

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FROM CREE TO ENGLISH

Part One: The Sound System

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M.S.

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INTRODUCTION

What's it all About?

What is attempted in this book is not a complete comparison between English and Cree - valuable though such a work would be. Rather, this study compares only the sound systems. Nor does it deal with all the variations in Cree and English sounds that would interest a phonetics specialist. It is an attempt to describe and compare only the phonemes of each language - the sounds used contrastively. Special attention is given to identifying differences between the two systems which are likely to cause interference or confusion. Specific teaching suggestions are provided for those who are teaching the English sound system to students who are more familiar with the Cree system.

When could this Teaching Material be Used?

The ideal time for a careful presentation of the English sounds is very early in the school experience of the beginner. Interesting listening games using contrastive material from the drills suggested would fit in well with the other exercises in auditory discrimination which are part of the pre-reading program.

Then, when students are "learning the sounds" in the reading program, the teacher has an excellent opportunity to teach the English sound system very thoroughly, keeping in mind the special kinds of practice that will be of most help to those already acquainted with the Cree sounds.

Other possibilities include:

- a few minutes of each day devoted to listening and pronunciation practice. (A carefully planned sequence would be used, with provision for regular review.)
- a brief presentation of a sound or sound contrast, with a pronunciation drill, could precede the regular handwriting period. (For instance, a pronunciation drill on /s/ and /z/ would be followed by writing the letters "s" and "z" and words in which they occur.)
- a series of lessons on the English sound system incorporated into the spelling program. (An advantage here would be that the several English spellings of any one sound could be taught together.)

An understanding of the Cree sound system will also help the teacher to be more effective in a variety of incidental teaching situations where pronunciation or spelling is influenced by the process of changing from one sound system to another.

How should this Material be Used?

The pronunciation drill, with various suggestions as to how it can be used, is described in some detail in the section "Teaching the Voicing Distinction". The basic pattern of the drill is essential in teaching contrasting sounds. However, the variations in how the drilling takes place are limited only by the creativity of the teacher. A few suggestions as to ways to make the drill sessions interesting are included when the pronunciation drill is first described. For most of the other drills, the contrasting word pairs are provided and the various games and exercises which can keep the drill lively and interesting are left up to the ingenuity of the teacher.

The Diagrams

The diagrams included in this material are mainly to clarify descriptions of how the various sounds are produced. Whether or not similar diagrams are used in the classroom presentations will depend on the teacher, and the particular needs of his students. Since the voicing distinction is one of the most important ones to be taught to Indian youngsters, the diagrams are arranged to emphasize this feature as the one separating many otherwise identical pairs of sounds. You will note, for instance, that the diagrams for /p/ and /b/ are on the same page and that they show the speech organs in the same position for both sounds. The only difference is the voicing for /b/. This feature has been indicated by pairs of wavy lines shown near the "Adam's apple" and vocal cords, suggesting the vibration that is involved in "voicing".

Symbols

The following is a key to the symbols which have been used in this book to indicate the phonemes of English and of Cree.

SYMBOLS USED TO REPRESENT ENLGISH SOUNDS

Vowels

/i/ as in sit
/e/ as in set
/æ/ as in sat
/a/ as in sot or sought
/ə/ as in but
/o/ as in "gonna"
/u/ as in push
/ɨ/ as in fir,
women,
circus,
wanted

Diphthongs

/iy/ as in seat
/ey/ as in ate
/ow/ as in boat
/uw/ as in tooth
/oy/ as in boil
/ay/ as in sigh
/əy/ as in site
/aw/ as in crown
/əw/ as in out

Consonants

Stops:

/p/ as in pill
/b/ as in bill
/t/ as in tear
/d/ as in dear
/č/ as in choke
/j/ as in joke
/k/ as in coat
/g/ as in goat

Fricatives

/f/ as in fine
/v/ as in vine
/θ/ as in thin
/ð/ as in this
/s/ as in see
/z/ as in prize
/š/ as in she
/ž/ as in treasure
/h/ as in hat

Nasals:

/m/ as in moon
/n/ as in noon
/ŋ/ as in sing

Vowel-like Consonants or glides:

/w/ as in willow
/y/ as in yellow

SYMBOLS USED TO REPRESENT CREE SOUNDS

Vowels

/i/ as in at<u>i</u>m (dog)
/ii/ as in k<u>ii</u>wehtin (it is a north wind)
/e/ as in m<u>e</u>skanaw (road or path)
/a/ as in <u>a</u>nim<u>a</u> (that one)
/aa/ as in m<u>aa</u>skooč (maybe)
/o/ as in pik<u>o</u> (only)
/oo/ as in mit<u>oo</u>n (mouth)

Consonants

Stops:

/p/ as in <u>p</u>eyak (one)
/t/ as in <u>t</u>aapwe (right; truly)
/č/ as in ma<u>č</u>i- (bad)
/k/ as in maa<u>k</u>a (but)

Fricatives:

/s/ as in <u>s</u>iipiy (river)
/š/* as in <u>š</u>ii<u>š</u>iip (duck)
/h/ as in pi<u>h</u>tokwew (he enters)
or č<u>h</u>ikaham (he chops it)

Nasals:

/m/ as in <u>m</u>askwa (bear)
/n/ as in <u>n</u>iska (goose)

Vowel-like Consonants or glides:

/w/ as in <u>w</u>iiyas (meat)
/y/ as in kwa<u>y</u>ask (properly)

Additional sounds occuring in some dialects:

(The following sounds replace each other as shown in the example)

"y" dialect -- nii<u>y</u>a (I, me)
"n" dialect -- nii<u>n</u>a (I, me)
"l" dialect -- nii<u>l</u>a (I, me)
"th" dialect -- nii<u>θ</u>a (I, me)
"r" dialect -- nii<u>r</u>a (I, me)

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*Eastern Cree only

CHAPTER ONE

LEARNING A NEW SOUND SYSTEM

We all know that languages are different. Perhaps the most obvious difference is that they "sound different". What is it that makes a new language sound so different from our own? It is not only the fact that the words are different words and are arranged in different ways. It is also that the words themselves are made of a different system of sounds.

Although the human speech organs are capable of producing a great variety of sounds, only a very selected number of these are used as important signals in any given language. Even in the familiar words of our own language there are sounds that we hardly notice because they are not among those that we use to tell words apart. For instance, we sometimes add a puff of air after a /p/ sound; sometimes we don't. Compare the /p/ in pill with the sound as it occurs in spin. English speakers have learned to ignore differences like this because they do not use them to separate words that would otherwise be identical. In a stream of speech sounds they will pick out all the /p/ sounds but automatically disregard the puff of air that may or may not follow each.

But what happens if we are listening to a language that uses a different set of speech sounds? If the language were Hindi or Korean it would make a great difference whether or not the /p/ was aspirated. If we used the wrong variety of /p/ we would be saying something very different from what we intended. It would take some time before we could train ourselves to respond to /p/ and /p^h/ as separate signals. In fact we would be in a very similar position to that of the Cree speaker who is not used to thinking of /p/ and /b/ as different sounds.

What is an "accent"?

We often hear the comment that someone has an "accent". A foreign accent is the result of hearing, and thus speaking, one language in terms of the sound system of another. That is, our version of a second language is highly colored by the features of our first language.

One example of a "Cree accent" is the rather common

confusion of the English sounds usually spelled "s" and "sh". Although most Cree speakers are used to some variation in the sound of their /s/, and though sometimes it may sound a little like our /š/, it is still /s/. Accordingly, when they encounter the English /š/, it will simply be an /s/ to them. They will "speak Englis " or buy "sells" for a "sotgun". A line from a common English hymn is "Thou wilt find a solace there." When the Cree youngster sings it he may well be thinking of a "shoe-lace"!

English speakers learning Cree fall into many similar traps. We are sure we are repeating just what our informant said when, in fact, we have replaced several Cree sounds by the English sounds we thought we heard.

Is a Foregin Accent a Handicap? When?

1. A foreign accent is a handicap when it causes confusion in meaning or comprehension. For example, confusion of thin and tin, or savings and shavings could alter a message considerably. Fortunately, the context usually makes clear the meaning intended. However such common Cree-isms as these continue to cause a good deal of merriment among teachers and other English speakers working in the North.

Perhaps a more serious block to communication results from a continuous flow of Cree-ized English sounds. Perhaps the message comes through, but the hearer becomes more conscious of the accent than he does of the message.

2. A foreign accent is a handicap if it causes difficulties in learning to read and spell in the new language. A class of Cree students made the following attempts to spell words from the Schonnel Spelling Test. They had been well-trained in how to "sound out words", but had not had any opportunity to study the words given on the test.

toboggan: tibuken, tapakan, tipbogan, tapakan

description: descrebsen

damage: damach

guarantee: carantee

Since they had not previously encountered the words, we have here their reaction to what they heard dictated. Besides the problems they had in choosing the right vowel, we see their confusion of several pairs of English sounds.

1) /p/ and /b/ ; /k/ and /g/ ; /č/ (the "ch" sound) and /j/

Their problem with all of these pairs grows out of a basic difference between the consonants of English and Cree. Cree speakers use each pair as two variations of what is essentially the same sound. English speakers are very aware that the second sound in each case is different. Though they may not be consciously aware that it is a voiced sound (vocal cords are in motion), they use this voicing distinction to separate many otherwise identical sounds.

2) /s/ and /s/ (the "sh" sound). The student who wrote "descrebsen" wrote it very nearly as he would pronounce it. His dialect of Cree does not use /s/ contrastively; it was natural for him to hear it as an /s/.

Fortunately most of the students can memorize a spelling list rather quickly, if given the opportunity. However it seems evident that, especially in the initial stages of learning to read and write, the differences between the English and the Cree sound systems may be more of a barrier than we realize.

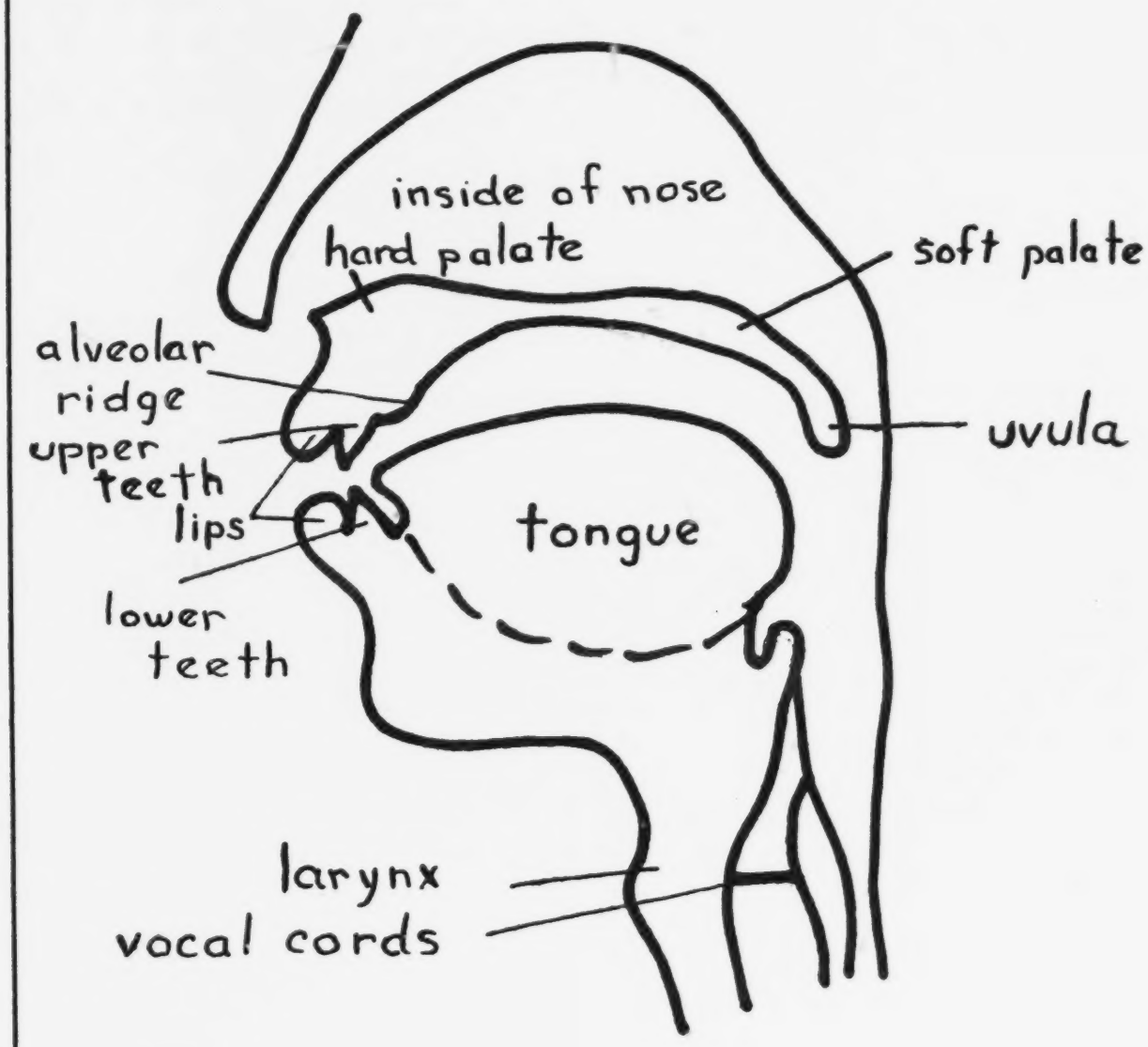
3. A foreign accent is a handicap when it colors speech in such a way as to cause social discrimination, classing the speaker as an "outsider", making it hard for him to be accepted on equal footing with the rest of the group. Although there may be no negative discrimination, his accent can cause his friends to type-cast him in terms of his ethnic group, rather than as a person in his own right. If the listener happens to have warm feelings toward the ethnic background of the speaker, he will be positively biased; if he distrusts or dislikes the ethnic group he will be negatively biased. In neither case is judgment based entirely on the speaker himself or the worth of what he might be saying.

Teachers who like Indian people and have spent some time among them will probably have no trouble in understanding or accepting their English speech habits. But whether or not one believes that communication or discrimination problems are ahead for his students, he will find that careful training in hearing and reproducing the sounds of English will produce better readers and spellers, whether or not the students can even speak Cree.

Erasing a Foreign Accent

How can a person learn the sounds of a new language so that those of his own language cease to interfere with

Speech Mechanism



his pronunciation?

- Informally, speakers learn through careful listening, much listening, and through imitation. For many Cree students, opportunities to hear standard English are very limited. The English they hear for many hours each day is an English already colored by Cree or perhaps by both Cree and French.

- Formally, the process can be speeded up and improved by a direct study of the new sound system, with drills designed to teach the necessary distinctions in sound, and to provide practice in hearing the new sounds as they are - not as they seem to be because of previous language experience. If the teacher knows something about the sound system of the learner's first language he can anticipate conflicts and difficulties and plan extra help where it is needed most.

<u>What are the difficulties faced by anyone in adjusting to the sounds of a new language</u>?

1) Learning to respond to variations in sound which he is conditioned to consider irrelevant. e.g. A Cree-conditioned speaker must learn to respond to the <u>voicing</u> contrasts in English. He uses what we would call /t/ and /d/ as one sound, not two. Although the vocal cords are in motion for /d/ he has never had to listen for this kind of a variation.

2) Learning to disregard variations which he is conditioned to consider relevant. e.g. Vowel length is an important signal in Cree; such differences in vowel length occur in English, but they don't carry any particular significance.

3) Learning to pronounce unfamiliar sounds. e.g. Such English sounds as /f/ or /v/ are not part of the Cree system.

4) Learning to pronounce familiar sounds when they occur in unfamiliar environments. e.g. A Cree speaker learning to pronounce /st/ or /nt/ at the end of a word is in a similar position to an English speaker learning to pronounce /ŋ/ or /kt/ at the beginning of a word.

We will deal with these learning problems in detail later, but first will have to determine just what the two sound systems are, and how they differ from one another.

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT IS THE ENGLISH SOUND SYSTEM?

If the teacher is a native speaker of English, his first task, oddly enough, will be to learn and to understand the sound system of English. This is essential whether or not he ever learns anything about the pupils' language. The problem is that for him the English sound system is built in and operates at the subconscious level - like walking, breathing, or swallowing. To explain this system to someone else is like explaining what happens when you swallow, or teaching someone how to walk - or how to breathe. If you think very much about how to swallow, for instance, you suddenly find it almost difficult. The English speaker may go through a similar experience in trying to understand the sounds of English. Often the hardest thing to teach someone else is that which we already know automatically. An analysis of the system we are using unconsciously may make our task clearer to us.

How are Speech Sounds Made?

During speech the flow of air from the lungs is stopped, restricted, shaped, or controlled by the teeth, lips, tongue, throat, and nasal passages. To this flow of air which is being constantly shaped and modified we may add the sound of our vibrating vocal cords. (To become more aware of the use of the vocal cords - or voicing, press a finger on the throat just below the "Adam's apple" and pronounce ah-h-h or oh. The vibration is easily felt. Then try s-s-s, and z-z-z. One is voiceless; one is voiced.)

VOWELS

If the vocal cords are vibrating and the flow of air is allowed to pass through the mouth relatively unchecked, a vowel sound results. Such streams of sound are basic to all words. Experiment with various vowel sounds, noting how the shape of the mouth and the position of the tongue affect the sounds produced. The English vowels and vowel combinations that are presented in this material will be symbolized as follows:

Simple vowels:

/ɪ/ as in sit
/e/ as in set
/æ/ as in sat
/a/ as in sot or sought[1]
/ə/ as in but
/o/ as in "gonna"
/u/ as in push
/ɨ/ as in fir, or the unstressed vowel in women, circus, or wanted

Diphthongs:

/iy/ as in seat
/ey/ as in ate
/ow/ as in boat
/uw/ as in tooth
/oy/ as in boil
/ay/ as in sigh
/əy/ as in site[2]
/aw/ as in crown
/əw/ as in out

CONSONANTS

Stops

Sometimes the stream of air is stopped momentarily. Some words begin this way; some have these sounds at the end or between two vowels. For example, if the lips are used to produce such a stop, a /p/ or a /b/ results. If the vocal cords are set in motion, the sound is /b/. In English there are a number of pairs of sounds like /p/ and /b/ - sounds which are distinguishable from one another mostly because one is un-voiced and one is voiced. If the point of articulation is further back in the mouth, against the velum, we can pronounce a /k/ (voiceless) or a /g/ (voiced). Another pair of sounds may also be classed as stops, although sometimes they are given a special

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[1] Many analyses of English vowels add another sound here, /ɔ/, to make the distinction between sot - /sát/ and sought - /sɔ́t/, similarly between the vowel sounds in cot and caught, or not and naught. Since many Canadian speakers do not make this distinction in their speech, and since Cree speakers have enough new distinctions to learn without this dubious one, it has been considered as one sound for our purposes here.

[2] The difference between /ay/ and /əy/ is apparent but is not usually used to keep otherwise identical words apart. Canadian speakers use the /əy/ before a voiceless consonant. Compare site - /sə́yt/ and side - /sáyd/. Many American speakers would use /ay/ in such words as sight, might or even like, where Canadians use the shorter /əy/. Similarly Canadians use /əw/ in many words where American speakers would use /aw/ e.g. about. The teacher will probably not need to teach these distinctions but will present the pronunciation he himself normally uses.

classification. They are /č/ and /j/, formed by pressing the tongue against the alveolar ridge. Since there is a certain amount of friction involved in the pronunciation of /č/ or /j/, they are often described as /tš/ and /dž/.

Fricatives

Sometimes a distinctive sound is made by forcing the stream of air through a small opening, the sound being determined by the kind of friction that results.

If we bring our lower lip up against our upper teeth, in biting position, and then force air out past this partial obstruction, the /f/ sound results. If the sound is voiced it becomes /v/.

If the tongue is lifted to rest loosely between the teeth and air forced through, the resulting sound is /θ/, the initial sound in thistle. If voicing is added, the sound becomes the initial one in then which we will symbolize by /ð/.

If the tongue is against the alveolar ridge, just behind the teeth, and grooved slightly to let the air slide over /s/ is produced. If this sound is voiced it becomes a /z/.

If the tongue is curled up against the alveolar ridge, a little behind the position where the /s/ was produced, the sounds possible are /š/ (voiceless) and /ž/ (voiced) -- /š/ as in sure and /ž/ as in azure.

A final fricative, the simplest of all, is /h/ -- the aspirate or breathing sound. It is voiceless.

Nasals

During the production of the sounds /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/, the flow of air from the mouth is stopped and re-directed through the nose - hence the term nasal. In all cases, the sounds are voiced. For /m/ it is the lips that close off the flow of air from the mouth; for /n/, the tongue closes it off just behind the upper teeth; for /ŋ/ the passage is blocked further back as the tongue arches up against the velum.

/l/ and /r/

/l/ is sometimes called the lateral continuant -- continuant, because it is possible to continue or prolong the sound, like the vowels, nasals, or fricatives, and lateral because /l/ is pronounced by letting the air flow past one or both sides of the tongue. Actually, it is the

movement towards or away from /l/ position, that gives it its characteristic sound. Some analysts have described three /l/ sounds we make - but in English we consider them all as one signal.

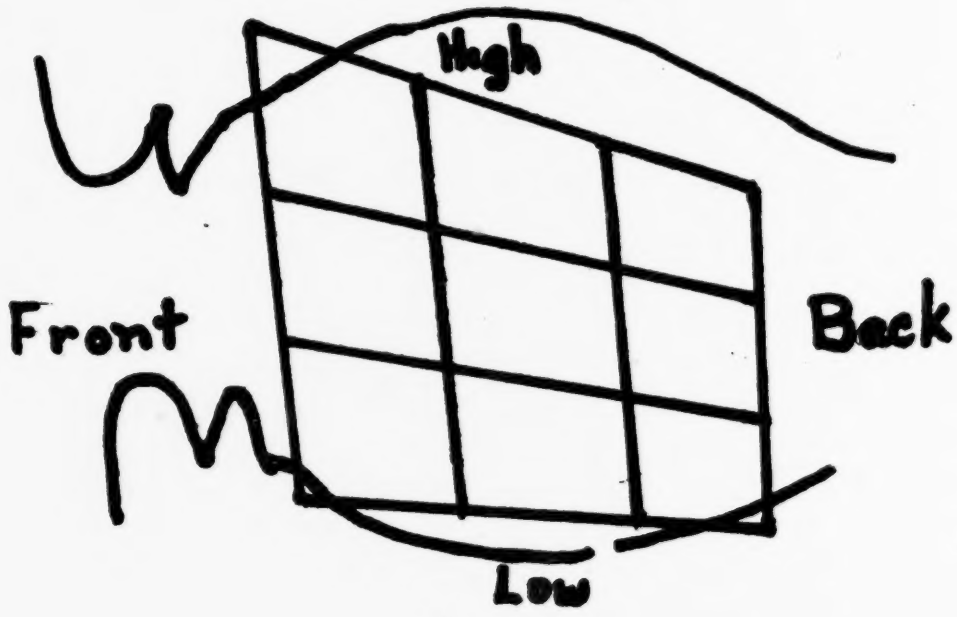
/r/ is another sound that is characterized by a particular tongue movement. The /r/ sound always begins with a backward movement of the tongue. The movement that will follow this backward movement will depend on what vowel sound follows. /r/ is sometimes classed as a semi-vowel. Often it does function much as a vowel, and it always affects the sound of the vowel preceding it.

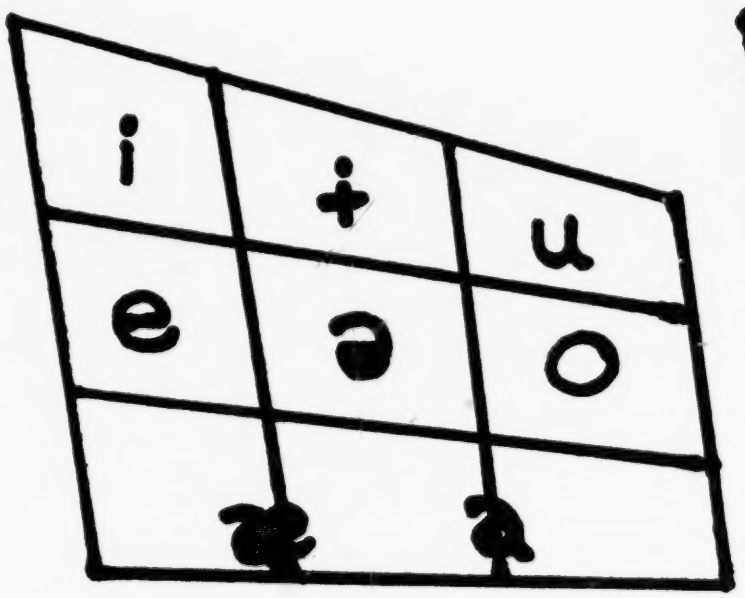
Semi-vowels

Two other sounds often classed as semi-vowels are /w/ and /y/. /w/ is produced by a backward movement of the tongue, usually accompanied by some lip rounding. /y/ involves a forward movement of the tongue - toward the high front part of the mouth.

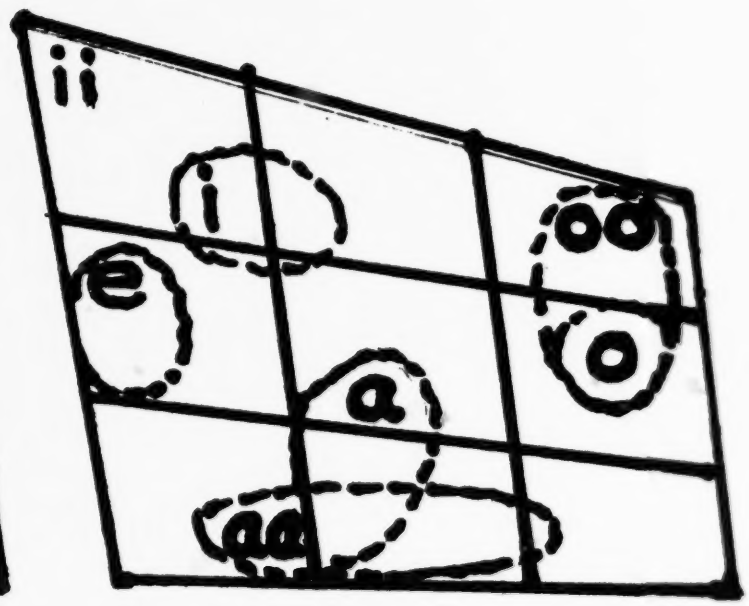
We are so used to our own sound system that we may think of it as universal, or as very clear and unambiguous when it comes to forming words. However, the foregoing description of speech sounds includes only the contrasting noises we emit while talking English - the ones which can be used to make a difference in meaning. Actually, many of these sounds could be sub-divided considerably. We have noted, for instance, that there are three /l/ sounds and more than one way of saying /p/. Although such a sound as this may include several variations in pronunciation it still operates as only one sound signal in English. Such a sound - or collection of sounds which operate as one for the native speaker - is called a phoneme. The use of slant bars indicates that the transcription is a phonemic one.

Tongue Positions for Vowels:





English



Cree

CHAPTER THREE

WHAT IS THE CREE SOUND SYSTEM?

CREE VOWELS

A distinctive feature of Cree vowels is the use of vowel _length_ as a meaning signal. Variations in vowel length often occur in English (e.g. compare vowel length in pairs like _neat_ and _need_, or _lit_ and _lid_.) However, in English, this feature is ignored as having nothing to do with the meaning carried by the word. In Cree, vowel length may be the only feature separating two otherwise identical words. In this material, a lengthened vowel will be indicated by a double letter, e.g. /aa/.

Since tongue position is an important factor in the production of vowel sounds, such terms as _high_, _back_, or _forward_ will be used to indicate the relative tongue position used.

These, then, are the vowel sounds of Cree:

/i/ - similar to the English /i/, but more forward, and also including some sounds similar to the English /e/ or even high /a/.

/ii/ - a lengthened /i/, which may sound a little like /iy/ to the English ear.

/e/ - similar to the English /e/ but slightly more forward. The English speaker, being familiar with the /ey/ combination (as in _cake_), is likely to add a /y/ glide to the Cree /e/.

/a/ - produced nearly in the position of the English / / as in _sun_, but often dropped to include the English /a/ and even / / sounds.

/aa/ - the lengthened form of the /a/ or the / / sound.

/o/ and /oo/ - These sounds tend to overlap somewhat in Cree, but both are produced higher than the English /o/, more in the position of /u/ as in _book_ and with less lip-rounding than English speakers use for vowels in

the same position. Crees will tend to pronounce English /o/ or /ow/ in this way too, and may often confuse the /o/ and /u/ sounds.

Glides

Vowel combinations are very common in English, and important in forming words. For example, the English vowels /i/, /e/, /a/, /o/ and /u/ often glide into the semi-vowels /w/ and /y/.

Cree speakers often substitute their pure vowel sounds for English diphthongs such as /ey/ or /ow/.

CREE CONSONANT SOUNDS

The most important contrast between the Cree and English consonants is the English use of voicing to almost double the number of possible consonants. Before listing the Cree consonants, it would be well to consider this feature in some detail.

Voicing: An important difference between English and Cree Consonants

When language is considered as a system of signals organized to convey meaning, it becomes apparent that the signals must mean the same thing to both parties trying to communicate. For example, suppose we see a friend nearby and he waves at us. This signal has meaning. Different ways of waving could change a simple greeting to a distress signal.

But suppose our friend had chosen to wave with his other hand. Would we even notice? It is unlikely. Yet if we encountered a culture where such a change in hands was significant, we would have to spend much time and effort before we became automatically aware of the distinction.

In English there are many pairs of sounds that are produced almost identically, as far as the position of the lips and tongue are concerned. The only distinguishing feature is that, in each case, one member of the pair of sounds is unvoiced, the other is voiced. For example, the articulation of the sound /p/ or /b/ is the same. In both cases, the flow of air is stopped by a closing of the lips. However, if the vocal cords are in motion, the sound is /b/. Similarily, without any change in position, it is possible to change a /t/ to a /d/, a /č/ to a /j/ or a /k/ to a /g/. It is this process of

adding sound by a vibration of the vocal cords that is known as voicing. Speech sounds include both voiced and unvoiced consonants. All vowels are voiced.

To demonstrate this feature, pronounce any vowel sound and feel the vibration of the vocal cords by placing your hand over your throat. Now pronounce the following: /t/, /k/, /p/, /č/, /f/, /s/, noting the absence of voicing. Then note the motion of the vocal cords necessary for /d/, /g/, /b/, /j/, /v/, or /z/. To become aware of how this feature serves to produce contrasting pairs, place your hands over your ears and start to say a word beginning with /p/. Change the sound to /b/. Immediately the voice comes on. Experiment with these additional pairs: t/d, k/g, f/v, s/z č/j. In English, these changes in sound are significant; they are real signals. There is a difference between a cheer and a jeer, or between a pill, and a bill.

In Cree you will hear both voiced and unvoiced sounds, but the voicing itself never changes the signal. It is like the man who may wave either hand, depending on conditions; the wave is a wave no matter which hand he uses. To the Cree ear, /t/ and /d/ are the same sound. He is conditioned to disregard the difference between them, and perhaps does not even hear the difference until trained to do so.

There is often an additional difference between the voiced and unvoiced sounds. There is usually a greater puff of air released in making the unvoiced sounds, especially in initial position in English words. However, it is not the aspiration, but the voicing that is the significant signal in English.

The following diagram may help to clarify the difference between the Cree and English use of the four positions in which "stops" are made in both languages.

Cree	p	t	--č--	--k--
Eng.	p	t	č	k (Voiceless)
	b	d	j	g (Voiced)

If you are trying to learn Cree, you must learn to disregard the differences caused by voicing. (e.g. You will not worry if you discover that Father Lacombe's grammar spells a certain Cree word with a "b", and another source spells it with "p", or if one person tells you the word for "where" is taante, and another seems to be saying it is daande.)

On the other hand, if you are teaching English to Cree pupils you must teach them to hear the difference, to respond to it as a separate signal, and to make the distinction clear in their own pronunciation of English.

List of consonants used in Cree

Stops: The Cree and English produce essentially the same stops, positionally, but the voicing distinction is not used in Cree.

Post-aspiration (a puff of air after the sound) occurs much less frequently in Cree than in English, but is non-phonemic in both languages. (i.e. it is never a feature used to separate otherwise identical utterances)

Pre-aspiration (a puff of air before the consonant) is important as a contrastive signal in Cree, but does not form part of the English system.

The Cree stops include: /p/, /t/, /k/, and /č/.

Fricatives: /s/ is a common Cree sound, but the pronunciation varies from the English /s/ all the way back to /š/, particularly among Western Crees. Further East, /š/ is occasionally used as a separate sound. As in the case of stops, there are no voiced alternatives (/z/ or /ž/).

The common English sounds /f/ and /v/ are not used in Cree. Except for the "th" dialect, /θ/ and /ð/ are not used either.

/h/ is used in both Cree and English, but in Cree it acts as a contrastive signal only when it occurs between two vowels.

Nasals

/m/ and /n/ are common in Cree and pronounced much as in English.

/ŋ/ is not used as a phoneme in Cree, although the sound sometimes is heard in the elisions occuring in rapid speech.

/l/ and /r/ are not widely used in Cree. (/l/ is native to Moose Cree only and /r/ is used in a Cree dialect spoken around English River.)

Semi-vowels

/w/ is used frequently in Cree; it is produced with less lip-rounding than is the English equivalent.

/y/ is common to both languages.

CHAPTER FOUR

TEACHING THE SOUNDS OF ENGLISH TO CREE SPEAKERS

THE CONSONANTS

Teaching the Voicing Distinction

What is the best way to teach the voicing distinction important to English speech? Probably if the teacher launches a classroom campaign to correct such errors every time they occur, he will succeed in teaching the distinction only to himself and in teaching the pupils only to "clam up" completely in his presence. Indian children are especially sensitive to group censure or to being "put on the spot" in public. But if everyone is "on the spot" together, perhaps some progress can be made in a more pleasant manner.

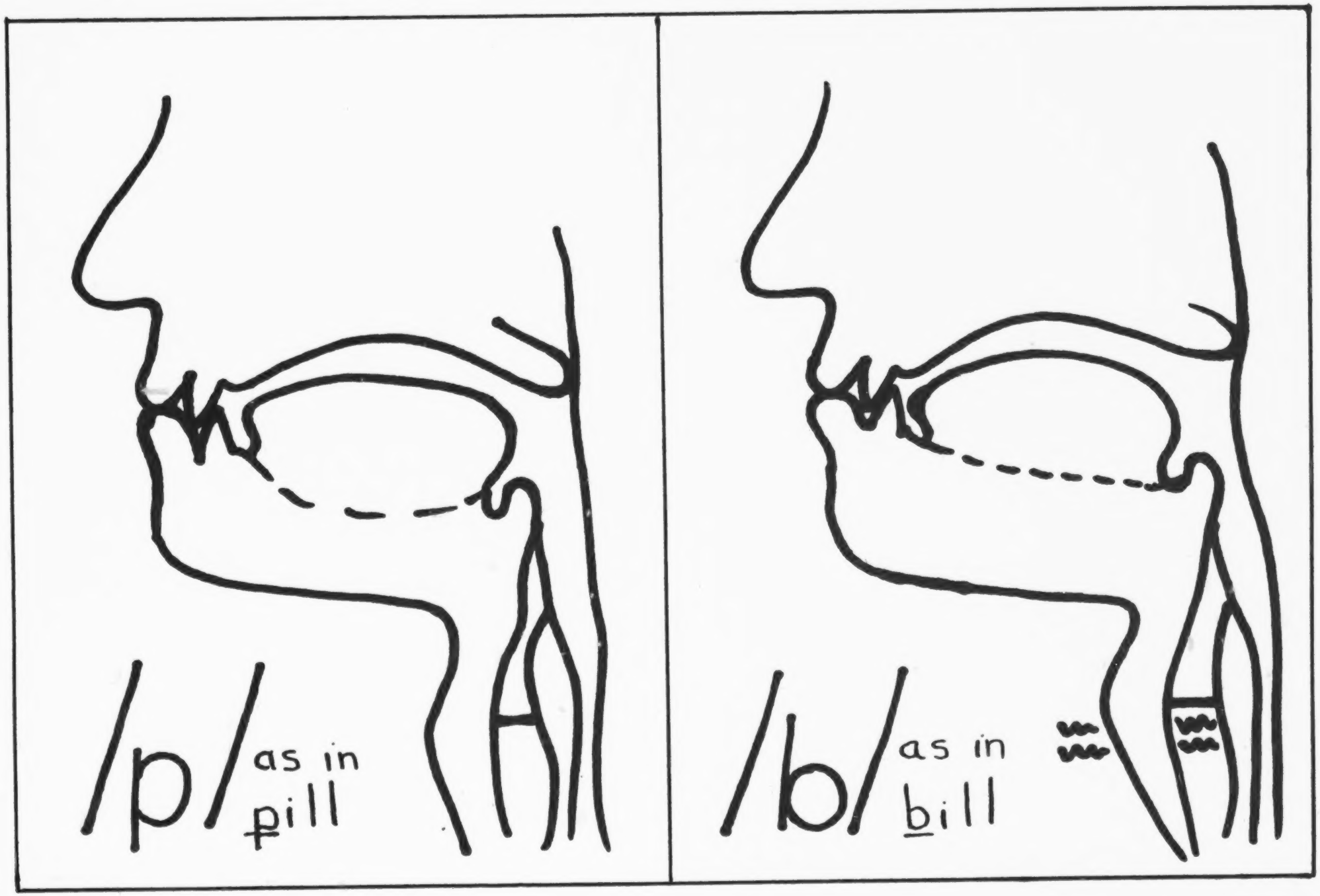
Two important steps in the teaching of voicing to Cree students are

1) an early and direct approach in teaching the nature and significance of voicing in English,

2) the use of carefully constructed pronunciation drills, to drill the contrast home.

A specific explanation of voicing

Very early in their school experience the children should be given an introduction to this important feature in English. It can be explained that we use our mouth and voicebox in making sounds. The voice could be described as sounding like a little motor we turn on in our throats, or perhaps like a bee that can buzz in there. The child can hear his voice go on by pronouncing certain sounds with his hands over his ears. Also, he can feel the vibration of the vocal cords by placing his hand over his throat while speaking. He will be amused by making his "motor" go on and off at will. In earlier grades, a Cree adult could explain this in the native language, emphasizing that although in Cree we don't have to think much about this, in English it can make a lot of difference. A few examples would illustrate the point.


/p/ as in pill
/b/ as in bill

The pronunciation drill

The pronunciation drill is set up as follows:

1) Choose the one particular sound distinction you want to teach. Find as many pairs of words as possible to illustrate this distinction. These should be minimal pairs, distinguishable because of this one feature only. For instance, if you are teaching the difference between /p/ and /b/, each pair of words must be those which are kept apart only by the difference between a /p/ and a /b/ sound.

2) For a class drill, choose up to eight pairs and arrange them as follows:

pill	bill
Paul	ball
puck	buck
pig	big
pack	back
pole	bowl
pike	bike

Your choice of words will depend upon the grade level of the pupils. Picture cards are best at first. These cards can be arranged the same way as the word list above, using a large pocket chart. It is important that this be a listening and pronouncing exercise, not a test of reading skill. Unless the students can read all the words without hesitation, it is probably best to pronounce them for them and have them repeat. This has the advantage of providing a correct model for them to imitate.

3) First pronounce the words DOWN the columns, emphasizing the correct pronunciation of the sound in question.

4) Next, drill ACROSS, making sure the difference comes out clearly each time.

5) Keep drill sessions short and lively, making the lesson as much fun as possible. Informal conversation games are helpful. First you can try something like this:

"Let's see how well you can listen. I'll tell you some little stories. Sometimes I will try to fool you by using a wrong word - a word

which makes the story sound silly. So if you hear me use a wrong word put up your hand right away and be ready to tell me what I should have said.

"My mother was sick last week. The nurse came to see her and gave her two bills to take. She------Ronnie?"

"You said <u>bills</u>!"

"Oh? Don't you take bills when you're sick? What should I say then?"

"<u>Pills</u>!"

"What was the word? Tell me again." (Include several pupils at this point. Make sure they do a good job of "teaching" you how to correct your mistake.)

I have found that the children do enjoy this kind of fun, do get the point, and can relax, since the laugh is at the teacher's expense rather than theirs.

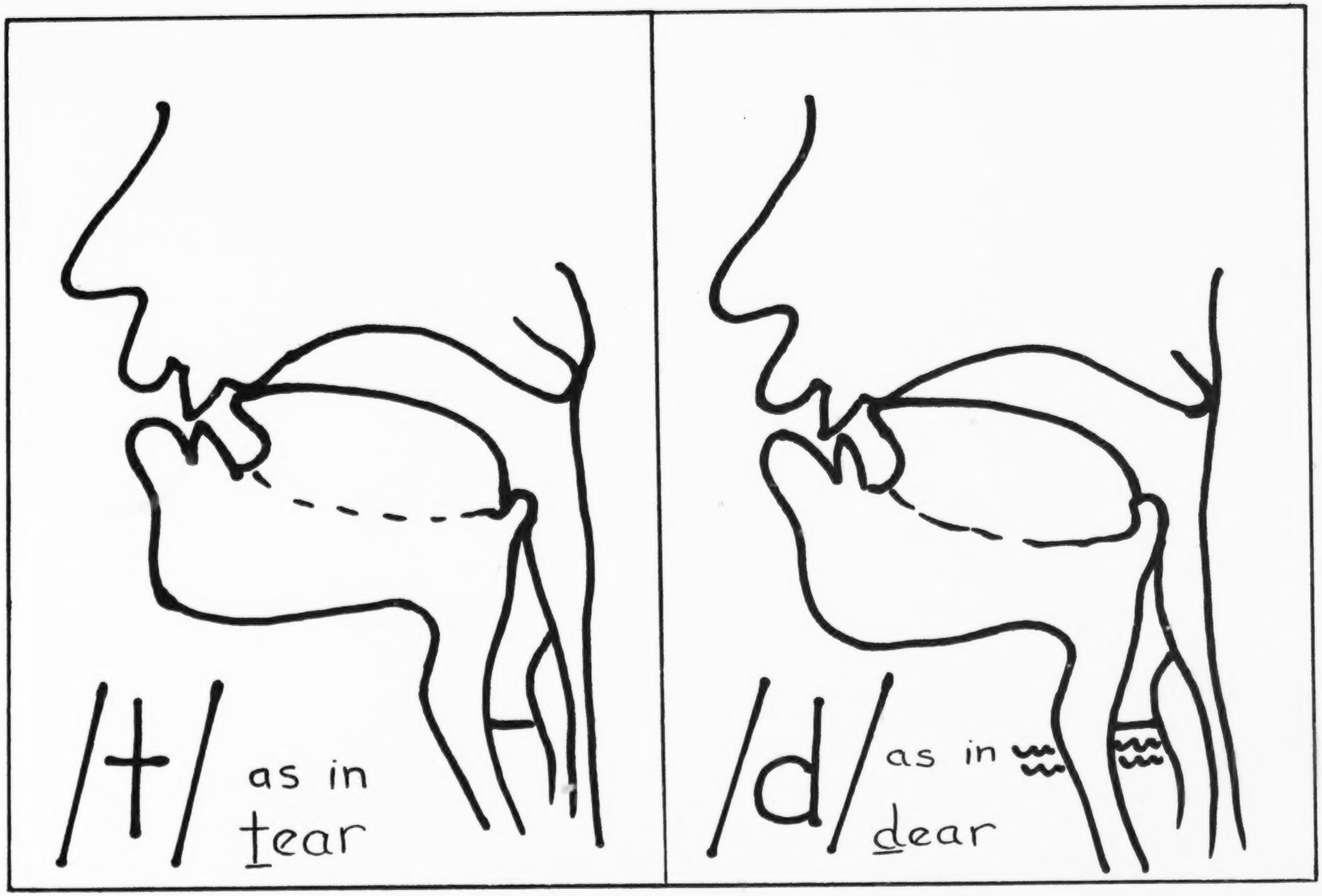
A guessing game could follow:

"I am thinking of something in our word list (or picture chart). It is long. It is made from a tree. What is it?" (pole)

Here the distinct pronunciation becomes essential so that the pupil can make himself understood. If there is any doubt, have him clarify his answer. Asking, "Did you say bowl?", point to the word or picture. His answer will emphasize the /p/ sound, and that is just what you want.

Only after this drill and game session on /p/ and /b/ could attention be drawn to errors pupils make during the day - and then not as a rebuke, but in the same spirit as the game. Perhaps, "Did you say <u>bin</u>?" -----"Oh! ---- <u>pin</u>. Now I hear."

Drill on initial consonants should be followed by drill on the same sounds in medial or final position.


/t/ as in tear
/d/ as in dear

Other word pairs contrasting /p/ and /b/:

initial	medial	final
pear/bear	ripping/ribbing	mop/mob
pox/box	roping/robing	rip/rib
push/bush	napping/nabbing	lope/lobe
pound/bound	tapping/tabbing	lap/lab
pull/bull	staple/stable	nap/nab
punch/bunch	maple/Mable	ape/Abe
peach/beach	dapple/dabble	cap/cab
pouncing/bouncing		cop/cob
path/bath		gap/gab
pay/bay		
pus/bus		
pest/best		
peak/beak		
pail/bale		
push/bush		

The other "stops"

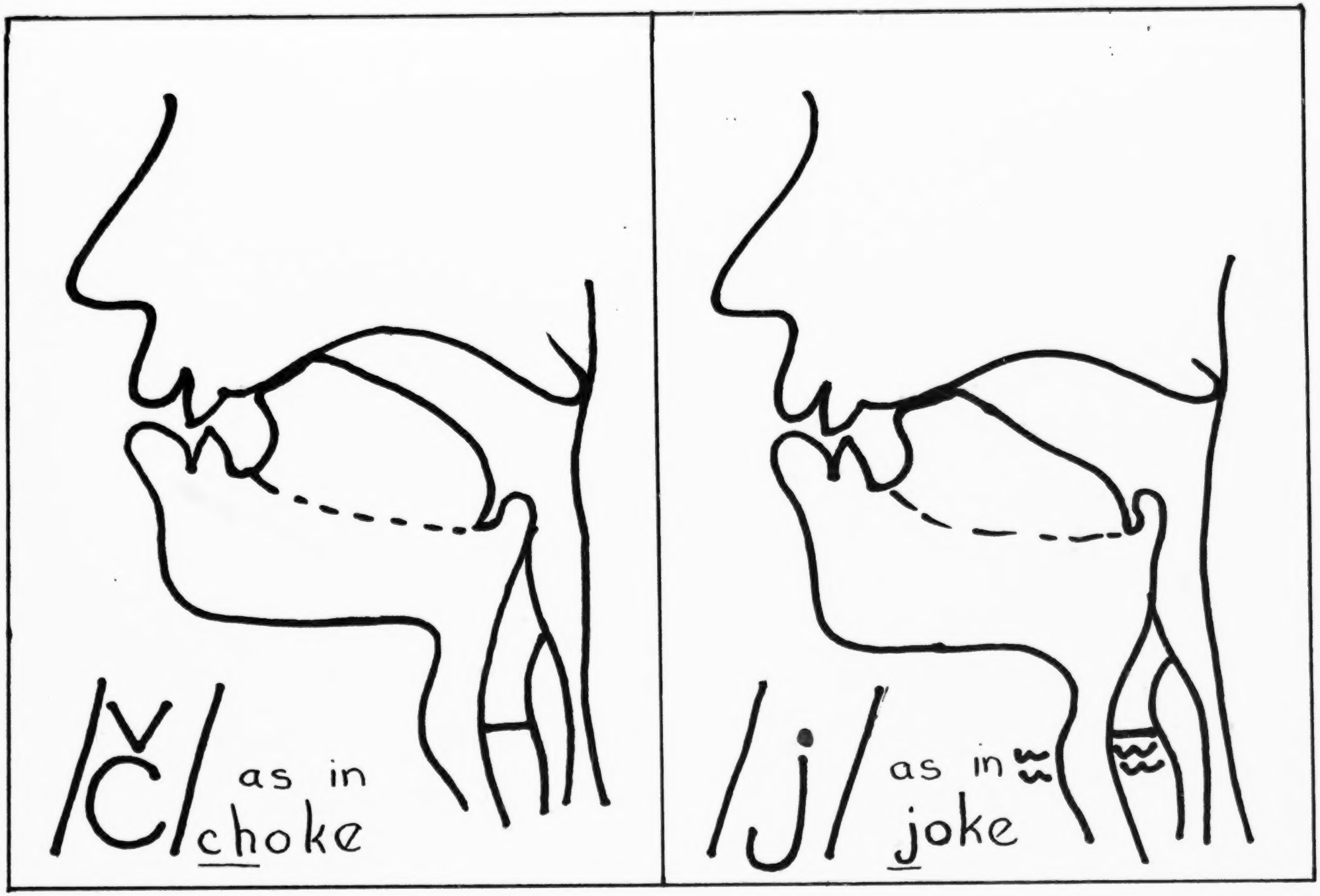
/t/ and /d/ -- Both /t/ and /d/ are pronounced with the tip of the tongue against the tooth ridge. /t/ is unvoiced; /d/ is voiced. Both sounds may be heard in Cree but they are just regarded as different forms of the same sound-signal: they do not make different words, like they do in /lit/ and /lid/ in English. Also, the Cree /t/ is not so strongly aspirated as its English counterpart, and may sound more like a /d/ to the English ear.

/t/ and /d/ contrasts suitable for chart or card illustration

tear/dear	tune/dune
tent/dent	tall house/doll house
Ten/den	cart/card
beet/bead	seat/seed

Other contrasting pairs:

tide/died	time/dime
talk/dock	tin/din
tick/Dick	touch/Dutch


/č/ as in choke
/j/ as in joke

try/dry
town/down
to/do
bit/bid
bleat/bleed
goat/goad
let/led

pot/pod
lit/lid
but/bud
butting/budding
feet/feed

North American English pronunciation of both /t/ and /d/ in intervocalic position is often voiced. For example, except in careful pronunciation, "bitten" and "bidden" often sound the same, as do "latter" and "ladder". Accordingly, it would seem best that, for teaching the voicing contrast between /t/ and /d/, drill examples should be restricted to words with this sound in initial or final position.

A Spelling test to check on discrimination of /t/ and /d/:

Fill in the missing letters:

li_	bu_	le_	_in	_o
_ry	fee_	_ime	_own	_ent
_en	_ed	po_	co_	bea_

(The words are chosen and pronounced by the teacher, in sentence context. Each word is completed by the insertion of t or d.)

/č/ and /j/

These two sounds are classified here among the stops, although they are often described more specifically as affricates - sounds which begin in stop position and then move into the fricative sound pronounced nearest to that position. That is, /č/ is sometimes described as /tš/, a sound beginning in /t/ position and gliding rapidly to the /š/ sound. Accordingly, /j/ may be described as /dž/, embodying the voiced equivalents of the same sounds.

However, to stress this feature of /č/ in teaching Cree children may be to accentuate a problem they are likely to have already: their /č/, in some word positions, sounds much like /ts/, e.g. "churts" instead of "church", "mats" instead of "match". Perhaps this pronunciation is more common to Western areas, where there is a prevalent s/š confusion. There are at least two approaches to this problem:

Either: 1) Draw attention to the /s̆/ as part of /č/, and relate the s/s̆ drills directly to drills on ts/tš.

or

2) Present the /č/ as a sound on its own, and practice it in initial position first. (It should present little difficulty, as the initial /č/ in Cree is very similar). Then practice a final /č/, striving to produce a similar sound when the /č/ is in final position. Follow this with a č/ts drill if needed.

Word list for teaching the /č/ in initial position:

chicken, chill, cheer, chalk, cheese, choose,

chuckle, chest, china, cherry

/č/ in final position

Have students listen for the same sound at the beginning and at the end of the word church - and at the end of watch, catch, much, touch, itch, which, patch, match, such, stitch.

Watch me catch the ball.

Don't touch the match.

/j/, the voiced equivalent of /č/

If students have learned how voicing helps to contrast between /p/ and /b/, /t/ and /d/, they should have little difficulty in discovering /j/, the voiced equivalent of /c/. As happens with the other pairs, both variants occur in Cree, depending on the surrounding sounds. However, for English, the student must learn to distinguish clearly between /j/ and /č/.

Contrasting pairs for /č/ and /j/

Chill/Jill	batch/badge
cheer/jeer	etch/edge
char/jar	search/surge
cheep/jeep	lunch/lunge
chest/jest	rich/ridge
cherry/Jerry	cinch/singe
choke/joke	

/č/ vs. /ts/

As was indicated above, many Cree speakers of English substitute a /ts/ for /č/ in some positions. If they learn to pronounce /č/ with the tongue a bit further back and pressed against the alveolar ridge and released suddenly - more as a stop, they may have less difficulty. Also, practice in making the meaning distinctions clear in the following list will give added emphasis.

each/eats	hitch/hits
pitch/pits	patch/pats
porch/ports	batch/bats
beach/beets	catch/cats
coach/coats	hatch/hats
peach/Pete's	match/mats

Review of the /č/ in various positions, with practice sentences to test mastery:

choice	each	kitchen
chance	reach	matches
child	march	pitcher
change	inch	teacher
charge	beach	luncheon

It was hard to catch the cats.

Pat's jacket had a patch on it.

We found some beets lying on the beach.

Each of these animals eats grass.

/j/ vs. /dz/

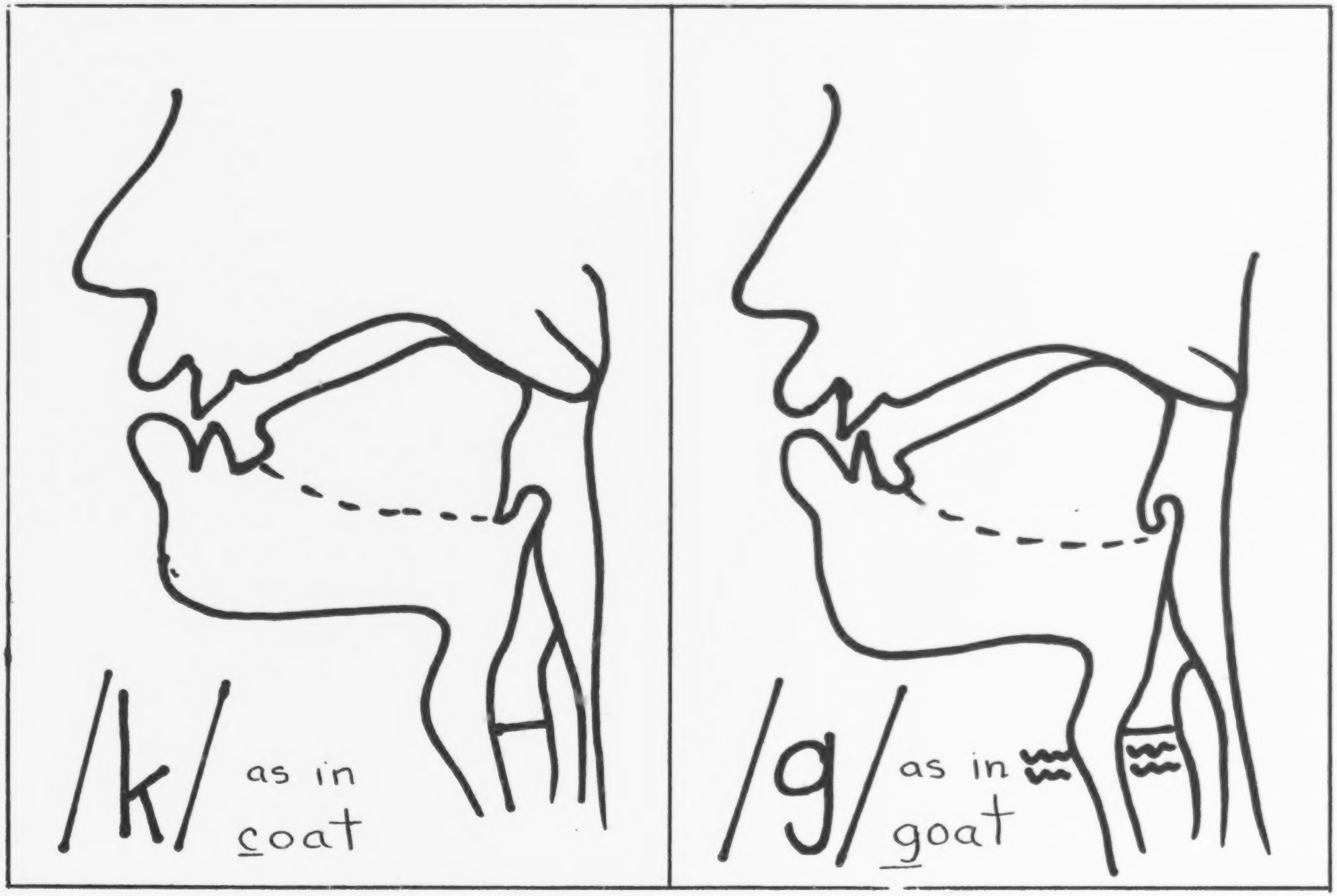
It is not so easy to find contrasting words for these two sounds, but the final /j/ sound is indeed common, and it does come naturally for the Cree student to pronounce it more as /dz/.

Review the /j/ sound in initial position, giving attention to articulation and voicing:

Jill jump Jack juice June July Johnny Jim

Jane jolly joke

Then give careful attention to the final sound in such words as: bridge, fudge Marge edge page age cage ridge badge


/k/ as in coat
/g/ as in goat

The following contrast drill may help those who have difficulty in pronouncing a /j/ in final position:

/j/	/dz/
age	aids
siege	seeds
wedge	weds
hedge	heads
wage	wades
forge	fords
budge	buds
sledge	sleds
rage	raids

/k/ and /g/

Both /k/ and /g/ are formed by stopping the air by pressing the back of the tongue against the velum. /k/ is unvoiced; /g/ is voiced. The procedure for teaching the g/k contrast is the same as for the other unvoiced pairs. The following contrasting word pairs will provide the necessary drill material.

Words suitable for card or chart illustration:

curl/girl	coat/goat	back/bag	tag/tack
pick/pig	dock/dog	buck/bug	

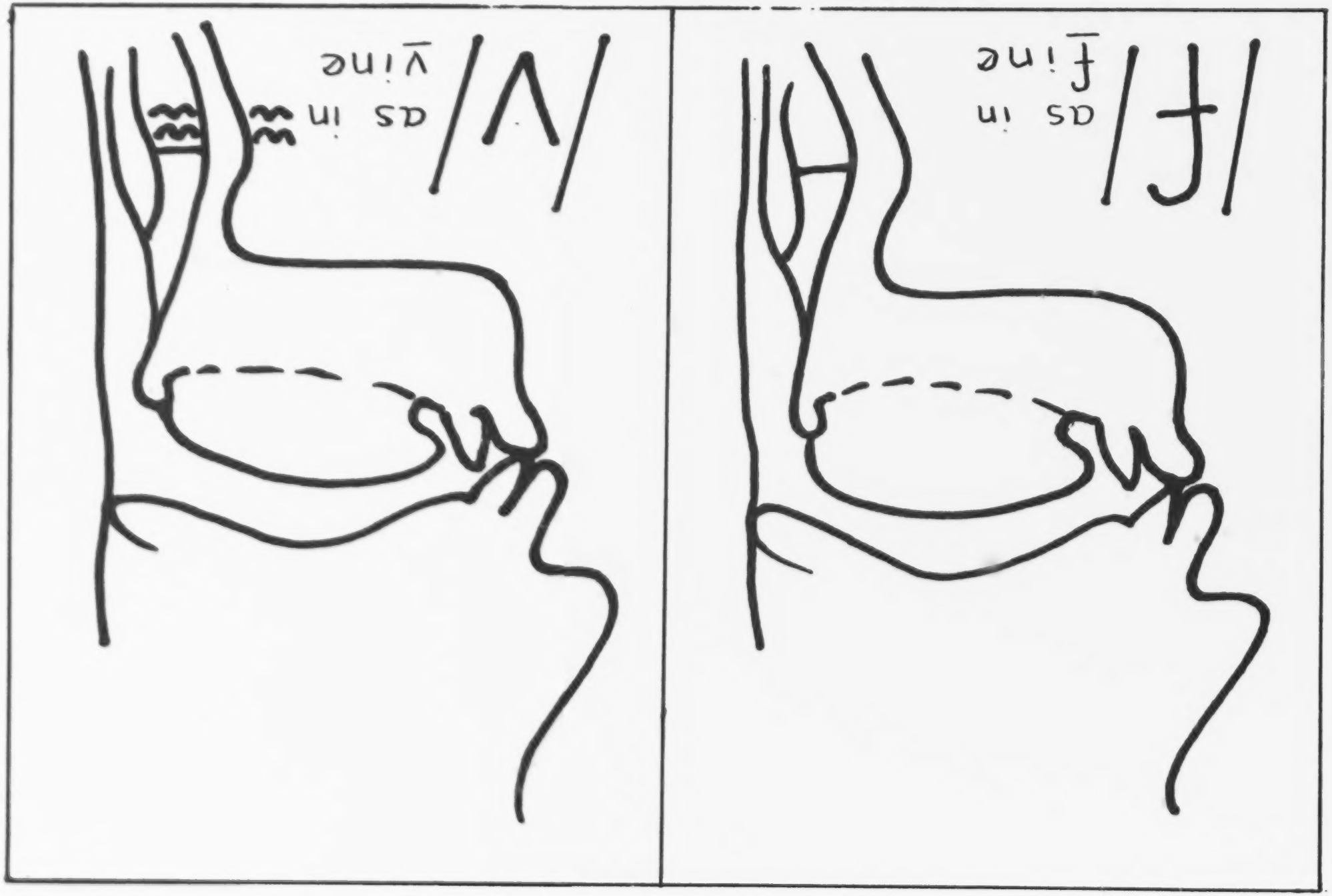
Other g/k contrasts:

cave/gave	could/good	came/game	cape/gape
tacking/tagging	lacking/lagging	lack/lag	
rack/rag	peck/peg	kill/gill	crow/grow

THE FRICATIVE SOUNDS

/f/ and /v/

You will note from the chart that /f/ and /v/ are foreign to Cree. They are also a pair distinguishable because one sound is voiced and one is not. Teaching the voicing distinction will involve the same approach as for other such pairs. However, there will be some students encountering these sounds who will confuse them


/f/ as in fine
/v/ as in vine

with the "stops" made in nearest position -- /p/ and /b/.
e.g. Joseph becomes Chosep /čósep/,
Vaseline becomes Baseline /bǽs+liyn/.

It is important then for students to be aware of the nature of the sound they are making. In the production of "stops" the flow of air is stopped momentarily - in the case of /p/ and /b/ this stop is made by closing the lips.

The fricatives, on the other hand, have this feature in common: each sound is produced as air is forced through a controlled opening. Perhaps where cars are familiar the idea of a "leaky tire" might prove useful in explaining the production of some of these sounds. To make an /f/ sound, for instance, the children can be shown how to bite their lower lips, and then relax the pressure just enough to let air escape, leaky tire fashion. Or perhaps, just "bite your lip and blow". Keeping this sustained sound it is easy to turn the voice on and off at the signal of the teacher. Each time the voice goes on, /v/ is produced. Large letter cards make good signals. Perhaps in the corner of the /v/ card one could draw a bee or a motor-car -- or a representation of whatever illustration was used to teach the children what it means to "turn on their voices."

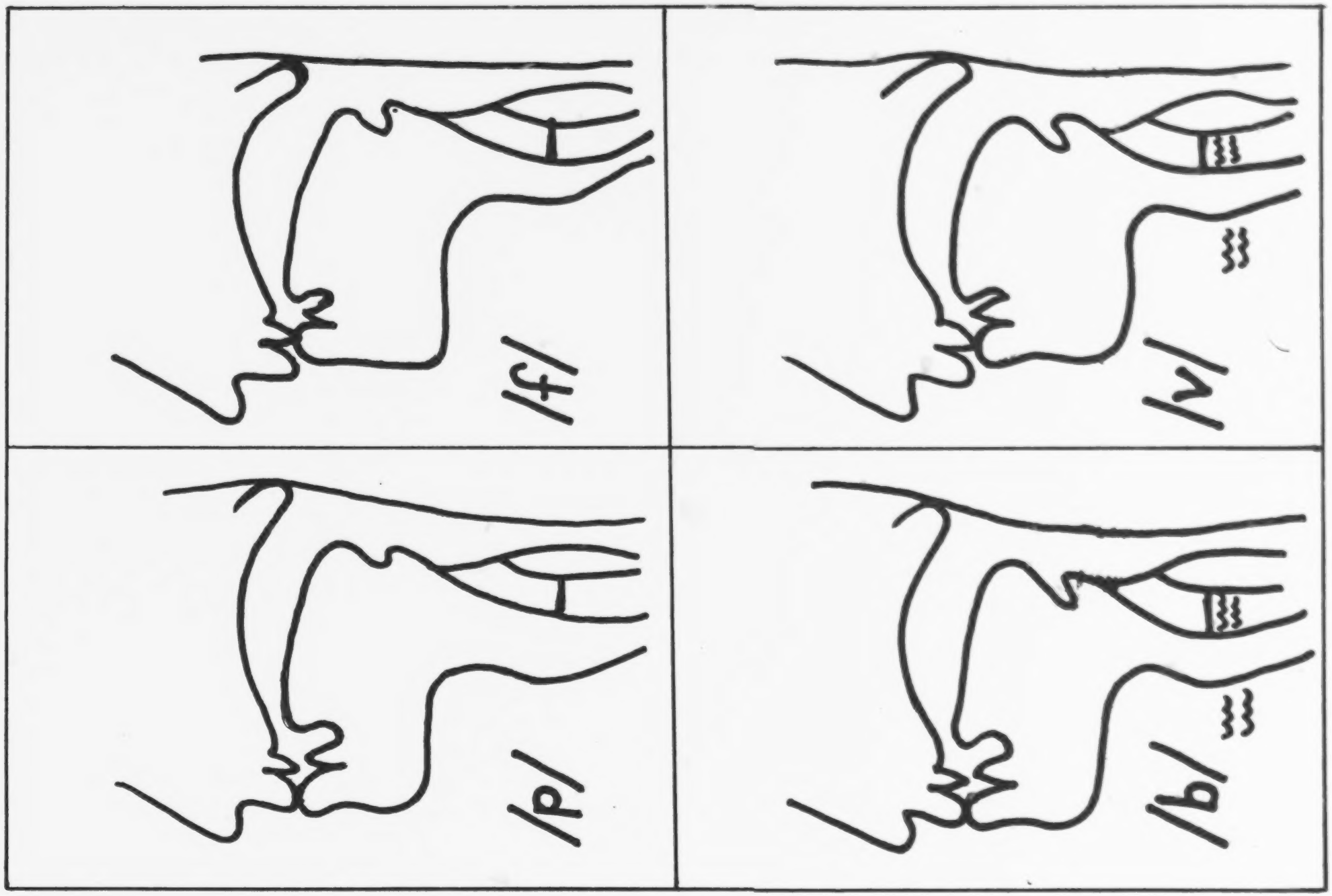
Word list for contrasting /f/ and /v/:

fain/vain	few/view	fine/vine	feel/veal
fairy/very	fan/van	fat/vat	fail/veil
fast/vast	fault/vault	fetch/vetch	folly/volley
fine/vine	foul/vowel	infested/invested	
refuse/reviews	wafer/waver		

These sounds are not so often contrasted in final position, although there are at least some common pairs, proof and prove, safe and save, half and have, leaf and leave.

The importance of using the above pairs in a drill is not only to teach students to make those particular words distinct, but to make them aware of the distinction between the two sounds so that they can apply such knowledge in the reading and spelling of unfamiliar words.

As mentioned above, /f/ and /v/ are commonly confused with the stops /p/ and /b/. Such a confusion would be even more difficult to remove in cases where pupils are hard of hearing. Since hearing defects are often not attended to in isolated communities, it would seem that children having this problem may be more common in Northern


/f/
/v/
/p/
/b/

schools. For instance, one northern pupil who had suffered repeated ear infections had extreme difficulty in distinguishing fast from past. Since her classmates with more normal hearing ability also made similar substitutions it seems safe to assume that the hearing difficulty had accentuated her difficulty with the sound /f/, (a foreign one to Cree.)

Some pronunciation practice to make sure that the /f/ sound has become familiar and easily distinguished from other sounds:

This is my half; that is your half.

He fell off the roof.

Pete got his feet wet.

He was running fast when he passed me.

My father has a bad cough.

Puff has fluffy fur.

Fifty-five fine furs fell on the floor.

Also, counting by fives provides good practice with /f/ and /v/.

/p/ and /f/ contrasts:

initial	medial	final
put/foot	supper/suffer	reap/reef
past/fast	puppy/puffy	leap/leaf
pull/full	copy/coffee	lope/loaf
pill/fill	dipper/differ	lap/laugh
Paul/fall	snipper/sniffer	wipe/wife
pace/face	loping/loafing	whip/whiff
pine/fine	spear/sphere	cop/cough
pole/foal	lapping/laughing	pup/puff
pond/fond	leaping/leafing	gap/gaff
pair/fair		gulp/gulf

Puff is not a pup.

His wife told him to wipe the dishes.

I will suffer if I don't have my supper.

We laughed when the puppy lapped up all the milk.

(Other such sentences could be constructed to give practice in using contrasting words in ordinary conversation. It is important that normal intonation patterns be used in the sentence practice - not an exaggerated pronunciation of the words in contrast.)

/b/ and /v/ contrasts:

As for the p/f contrast, it is important to note that the first sound is made by pressing the lips together, the second by pressing the lower lip up against the top teeth. The use of a small mirror may help to make this distinction clear. The children can watch for this "biting position" when pronouncing words containing a /v/.

bane/vane	best/vest	bat/vat
bolt/volt	bile/vile	bail/veil
berry/very	buy/vie	bet/vet
robe/rove	rebel/revel	dub/dove
boat/vote	bent/vent	banish/vanish

Practice words and sentences containing common uses of the /v/ sound, listening carefully to see that a true /v/ is used, not a /b/ or /f/.

It's very heavy.

I came to visit.

Seven brave men are in the cave.

I love to hear her voice.

He went to the village to buy some Vaseline.

Come and play volley ball with us.

Using the following sentence patterns, list a number of suitable endings and proceed round the class quickly, each member completing the sentence with a suitable ending. In rapid speech it will be harder to keep a clear /v/ sound.

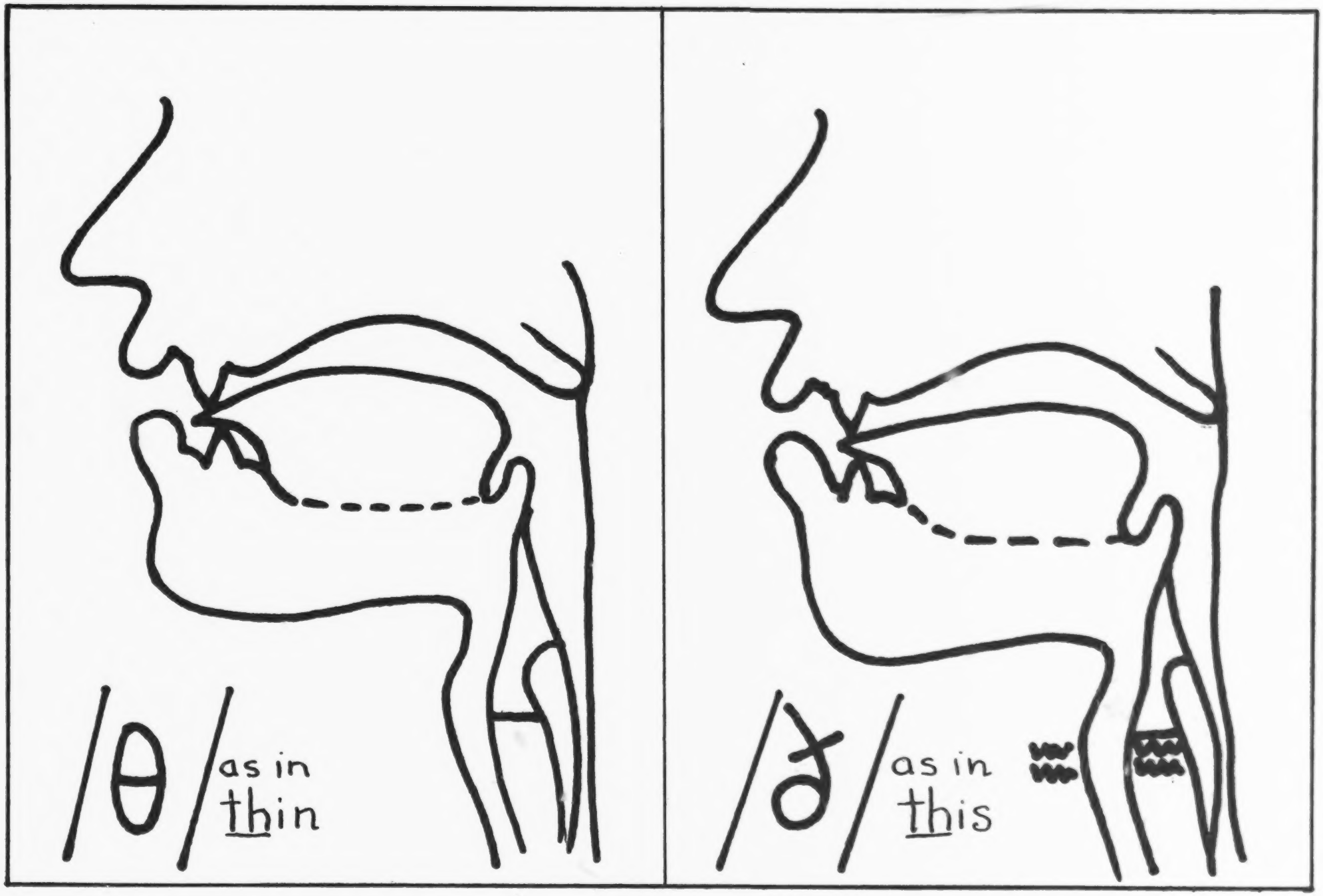
I've been visiting _____.

I have five heavy _____.

I have a _____.

The two sounds of th

The th pair represent two contrasting sounds in English, /θ/ and /ð/, which are foreign to most forms of


/θ/ as in thin
/ð/ as in this

Cree and incidentally, foreign to French as well. Since many Cree children are influenced by French, Cree, and an English dialect with French and Cree characteristics, it is not surprising that these sounds cause a great deal of difficulty.

Non-English speakers commonly substitute for both sounds the nearest "stop" positionally. Thus instead of the θ/ð pair, they use t/d. The voiceless /θ/ is replaced by /t/ and the voiced /ð/ is replaced by /d/: e.g. "Tank you for dat."

The important thing to stress in teaching the sounds represented by the letters <u>th</u> is that to pronounce them one must put his tongue between his teeth. The sound is made by the air being pushed out through the narrow space between. Prator suggests that the student be told, "Put your tongue between your teeth and blow." If they add voice to this sound, the /ð/ is produced.

Have them practice the /θ/

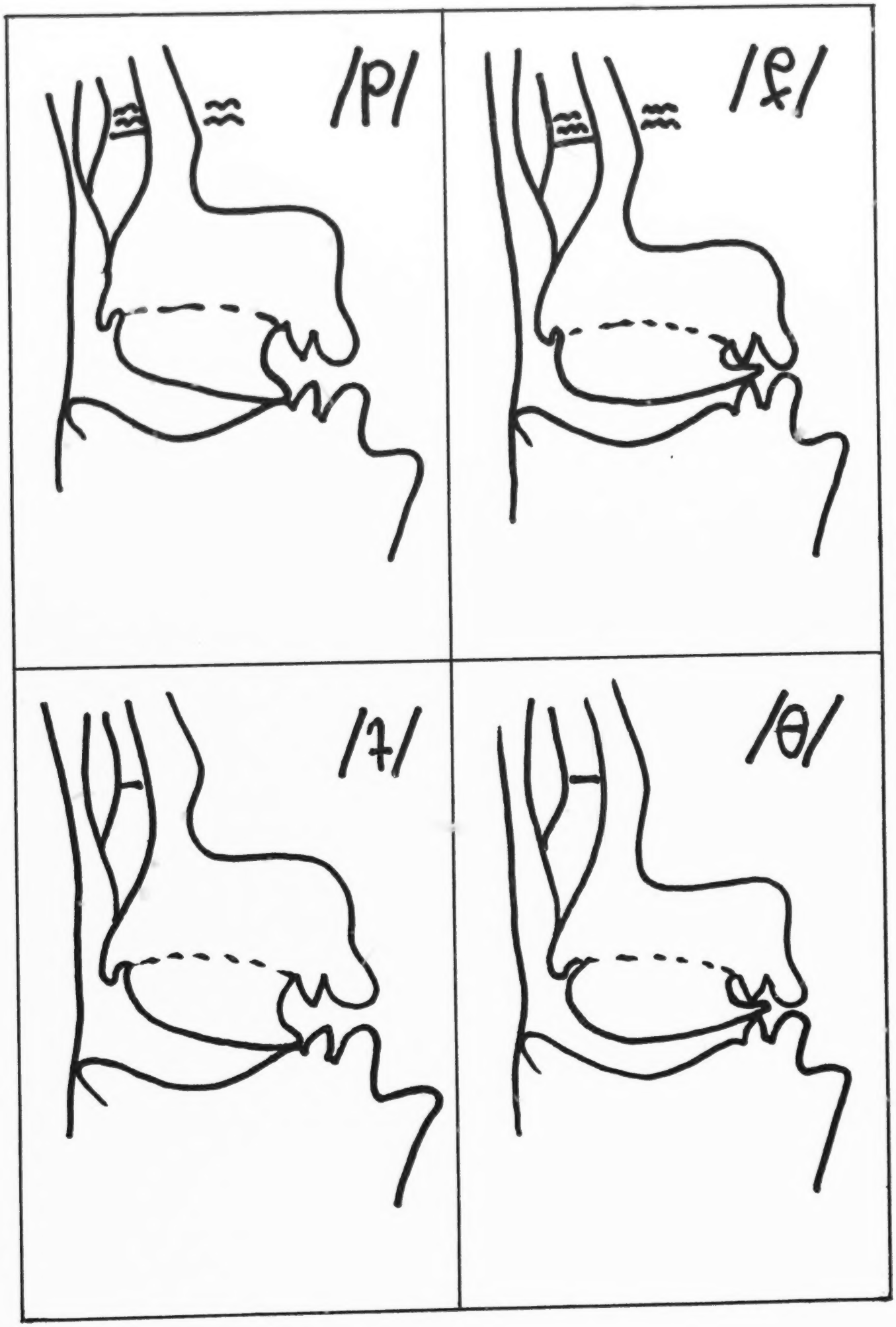
θ θ θ θ θ θ θ

thistle, thaw, thank, theft, think,
throw, third, truth, month, method,
arithmetic, thick and thin, thirty,
thorn, thought, mouth, death, Ruth,
Arthur, Ethel, moth, cloth, teeth,
tooth

Review the production of /t/, noting that it is not a friction or blowing sound, but a "stop" in the flow of air. Contrast the tongue position for the two sounds (use diagram).

Practice the following word pairs, drilling first <u>down</u> columns, then across.

thick	tick
faith	fate
sheath	sheet
theme	team
thread	tread
nothing	nutting
thanks	tanks
bath	bat


/p/
/f/
/t/
/θ/

through	true
three	tree

/ð/

If the students have become familiar with voicing distinctions, it will not be difficult for them to voice the /θ/ sound, to produce / /.

Practice the two sounds, turning the voice on and off:

θ ð θ ð θ ð θ ð θ ð θ

Have the students listen for the voiced sound in the following, and then pronounce carefully after the teacher, noting whether the /ð/ is at the beginning, end, or middle of the word.

than these this the though thus soothe

breathe leather bathing rather

my other brother father and mother of the weather

get them together either this or that

The main problem with the /θ/ and /ð/ sounds will be to distinguish them from the t/d pair, rather than to tell them one from another. The following drill contrasts /ð/ and /d/:

though	doe	loathe	load
they	day	writhe	ride
then	den	tithe	tide
those	doze	worthy	wordy
there	dare		
other	udder		

It is common for some European speakers to substitute s/z for θ/ð . It is not common, though, for Cree speakers, but if some do have this difficulty a similar drill can be constructed, using pairs like clothe/close, or for the other two sounds, mouth/mouse or thank/sank.

In contrast to the way we use such pairs as t/d or f/v, it is seldom that the voicing difference between /θ/ and /ð/ is used as the only signal to differentiate between two meanings. However, there are a few such pairs, e.g. <u>mouth</u> (noun) and <u>mouth</u> (verb), or <u>thy</u> and <u>thigh</u>, thistle/this'll, ether/either, etc.

However, at least one popular language workbook requires students to sort words as to whether they contain the "hard" or "soft" th. i.e. the voiced sound /ð/ and the voiceless /θ/. For such practice, the teacher, or a student, could dictate several words such as bath, then, this, that, thanks, and the others indicate by some signal whether the voiced or unvoiced sound was used. Or, if they read, the pupils could say the words quietly to themselves and mark them as voiced or unvoiced. Unlike the other similar contrasting pairs, the /θ/ and /ð/ sounds are indistinguishable in English spelling.

Even after individuals have become fluent in English, many slip into the old t/d pattern for th sounds in rapid speech, especially when the θ/ð sounds occur in unstressed syllables. Once word drills have fixed these two sounds in mind, making the distinction clear, practice must be extended to conversational sentences pronounced as in normal rapid speech.

For example:

I'm in the _____.

I'm looking for the _____.

I think that _____.

I think I'll _____.

This is a _____.

You said that _____.

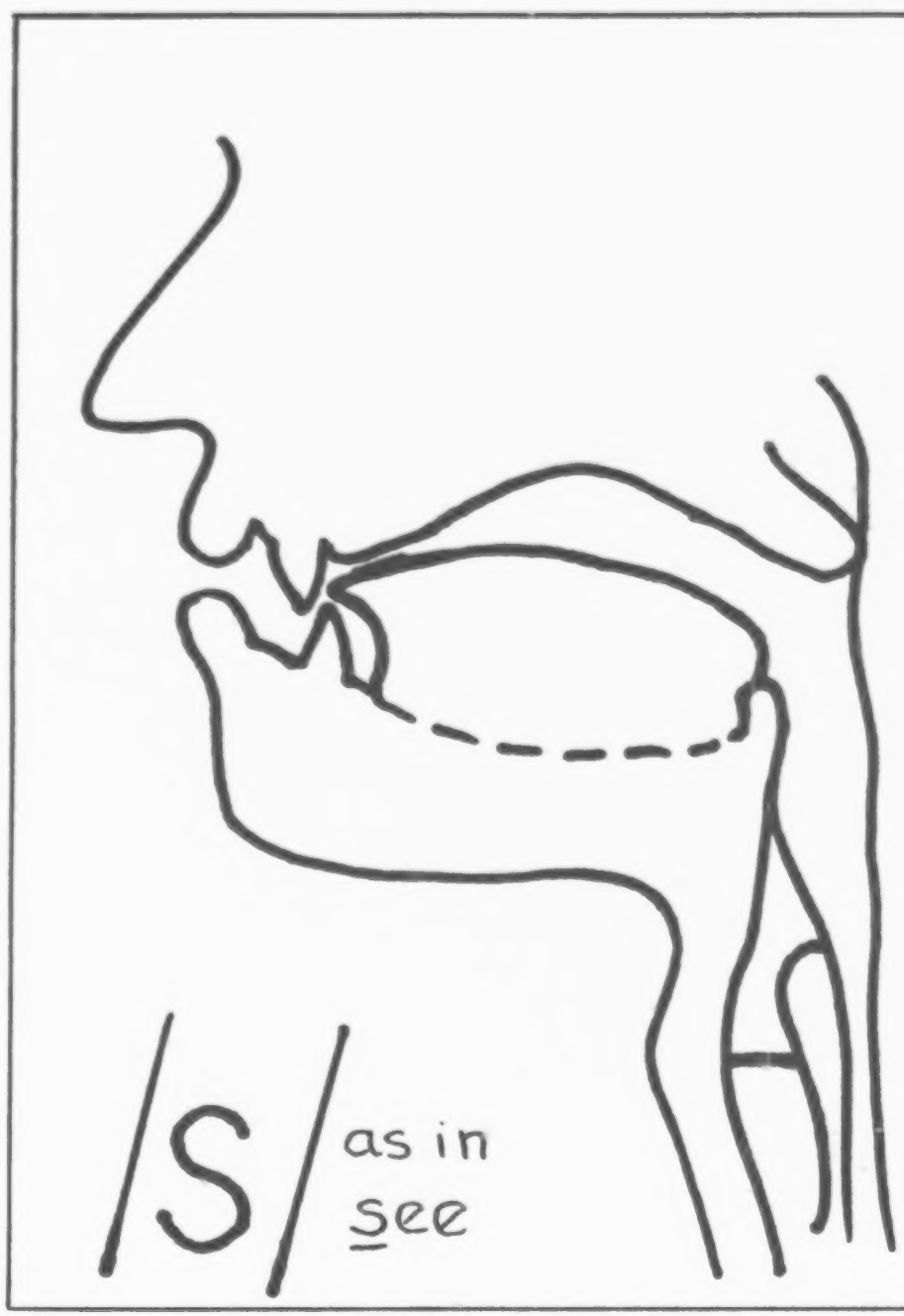
First you _____ and then you _____.

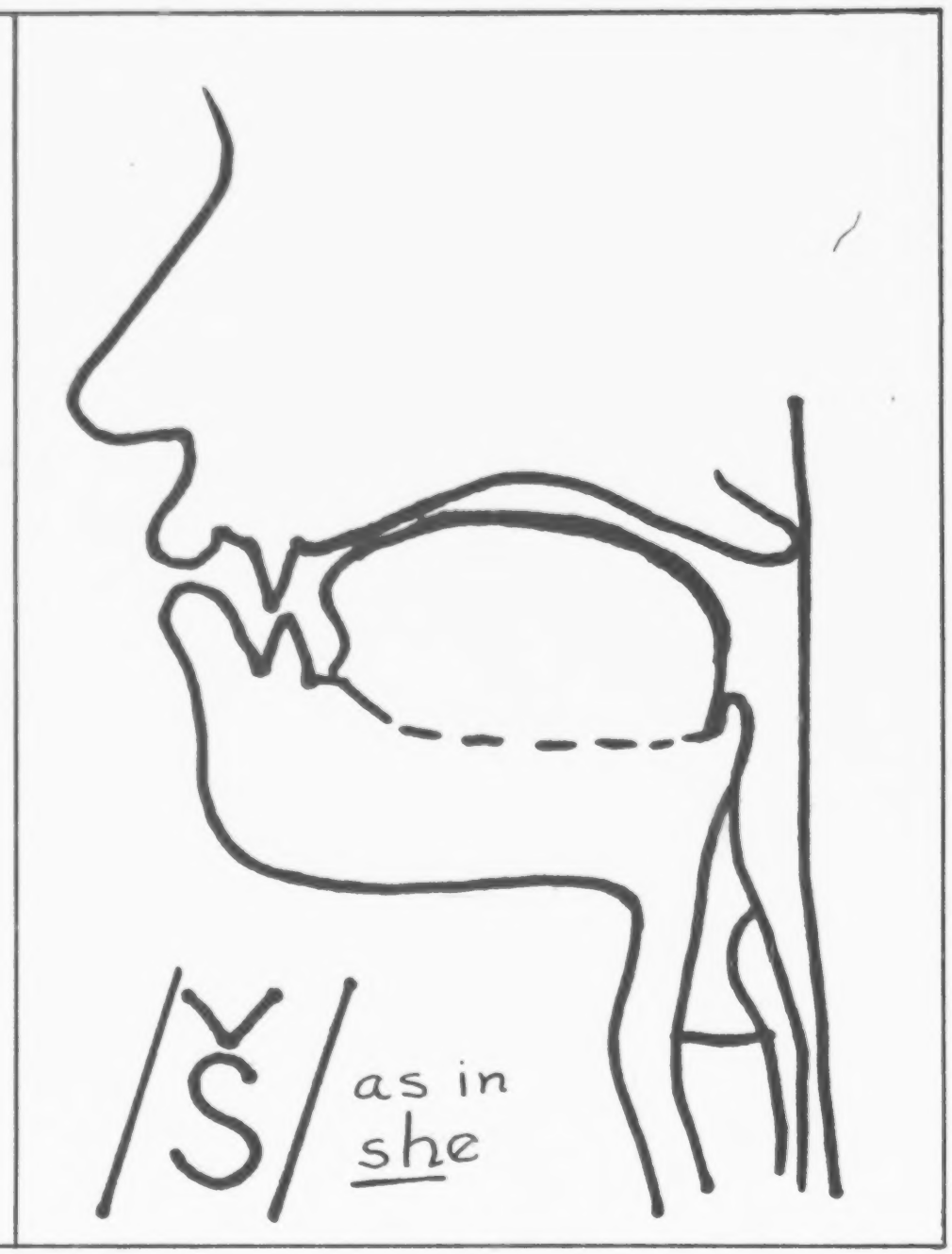
The old children's game, "Do this, do that" may also provide some good practice.

Teaching the English /s/ and /š/:

Cree children will be familiar with the /s/ sound, but the Cree /s/ varies in position producing sounds all the way from /s/ to /š/. Eastern Cree does make use of /š/ as a separate sound, but further west the distinction becomes blurred or lost entirely. (You will hear in some communities that the men are trucking loads of "savings". Sounds like a modern Aladdin story, doesn't it!)

In the production of /s/, the tip of the tongue may touch the lower teeth and the blade of the tongue be near the tooth ridge, allowing the air to escape


/S/ as in see


/š/ as in she

over the front surface of the tongue, or the tip of the tongue may contact the tooth ridge leaving a slight opening for the air to escape.

In the production of /š/, the middle of the tongue is raised toward the hard palate, with sides touching the upper teeth. Air excapes over the broad surface of the tongue. The lips are spread wider also, as this broader stream of air escapes.

Explaining how the sound is made may help; it may not. It would seem that the feature worth stressing is the position of the tongue and the way the lips tend to spread and protrude during pronunciation of the /š/. The diagram will show this change in tongue position, and the children should experiment with the two sounds until they can feel this change in tongue position. However, if the explanation becomes too confusing, it may be best to drop it and concentrate on mimicry.

Contrast Drill for /s/ and /š/:

see	she
seat	sheet
save	shave
sigh	shy
Sue	shoe
said	shed
sell	shell

Pronounce the words down the columns first, until correct pronunciation is fixed for each column. Then drill across, so that distinctions are clearly made. Develop conversation games such as the following:

Each student asks in turn, "What did I save?" Another, or the teacher, will answer, "You saved your money." If the child has used the /š/ sound for /s/, the answer is "You shaved your face." This can give valuable practice to the one who asks the question and to the one who answers.

Listening for /š/:

What would you say to your brothers and sisters if the baby in your house had just fallen asleep and you did not want them to wake him? ----"Sh!" I am going to say some words for you. Some have a "sh" in them. Some do not. If you hear the "sh" sound, put

your finger before your mouth and say "Sh!" (List would include words with /s/ and words with /š/.)

Other word contrasts for /s/ and /š/:

sin/shin sort/short seep/sheep so/show
sign/shine mass/mash plus/plush muss/mush
lass/lash sealed/shield

But even if you are so successful that the pupils are proudly reciting "She sells sea shells by the seashore," you are still not finished with the s/š problem. Trust English, if you add voicing you have two new sounds! If voicing drills have become familiar, the /s/ to /z/ switch will be readily grasped. The /š/ to /ž/ may be a little harder. Then you can try your hand at helping them to distinguish between all four sounds. Don't overdo it, of course. Much of this can be taught as it comes up in regular word presentations. Admittedly, the /ž/ is not used very often in English, at least not in direct contrast with /š/. But you will understand when the students "mezzer tings with a ruler" or read about "sining trezzers."

/s/ and /z/ contrasts:

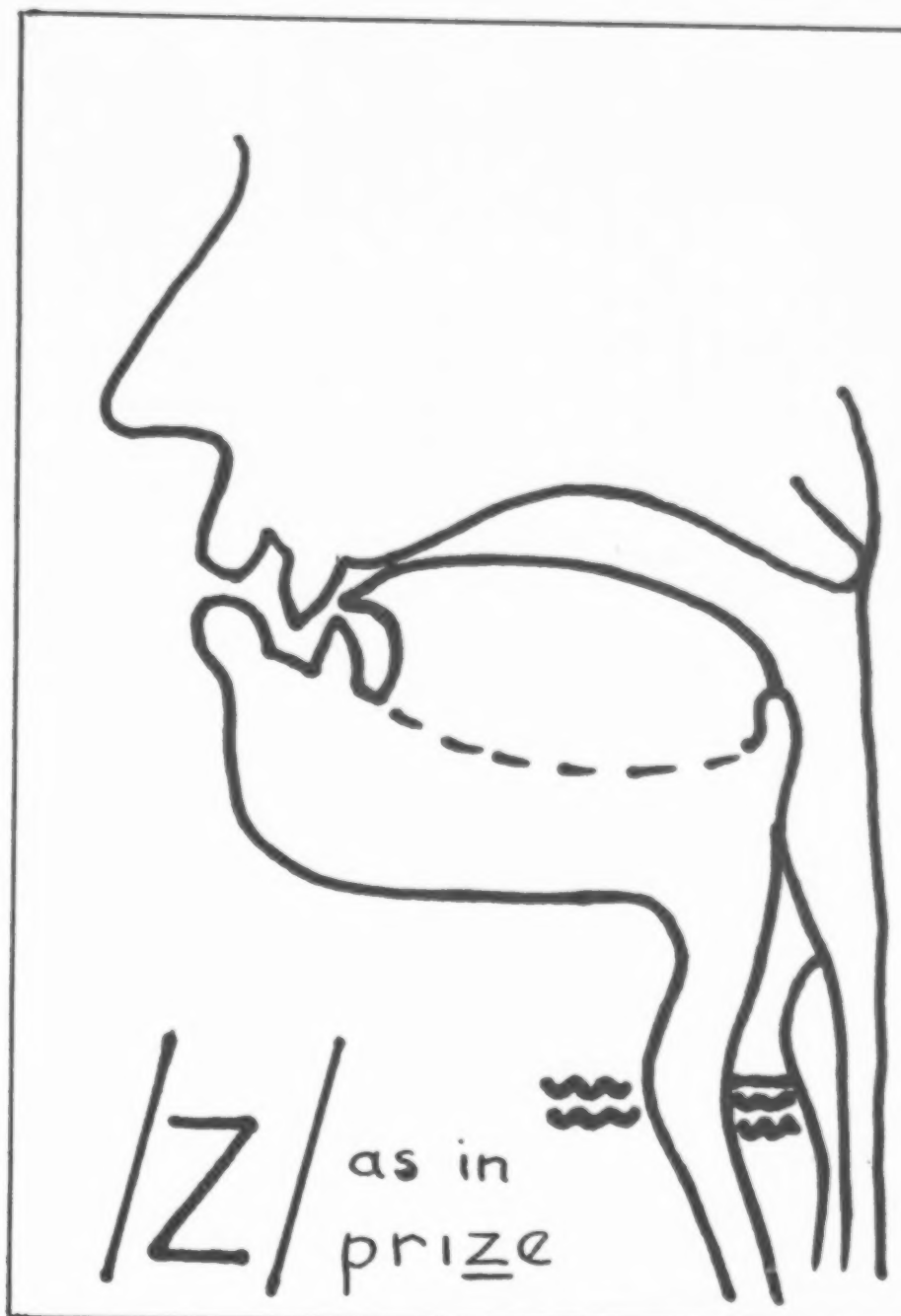
seal/zeal sing/zing sip/zip see/zee
said/zed lace/lays mace/maize face/phase

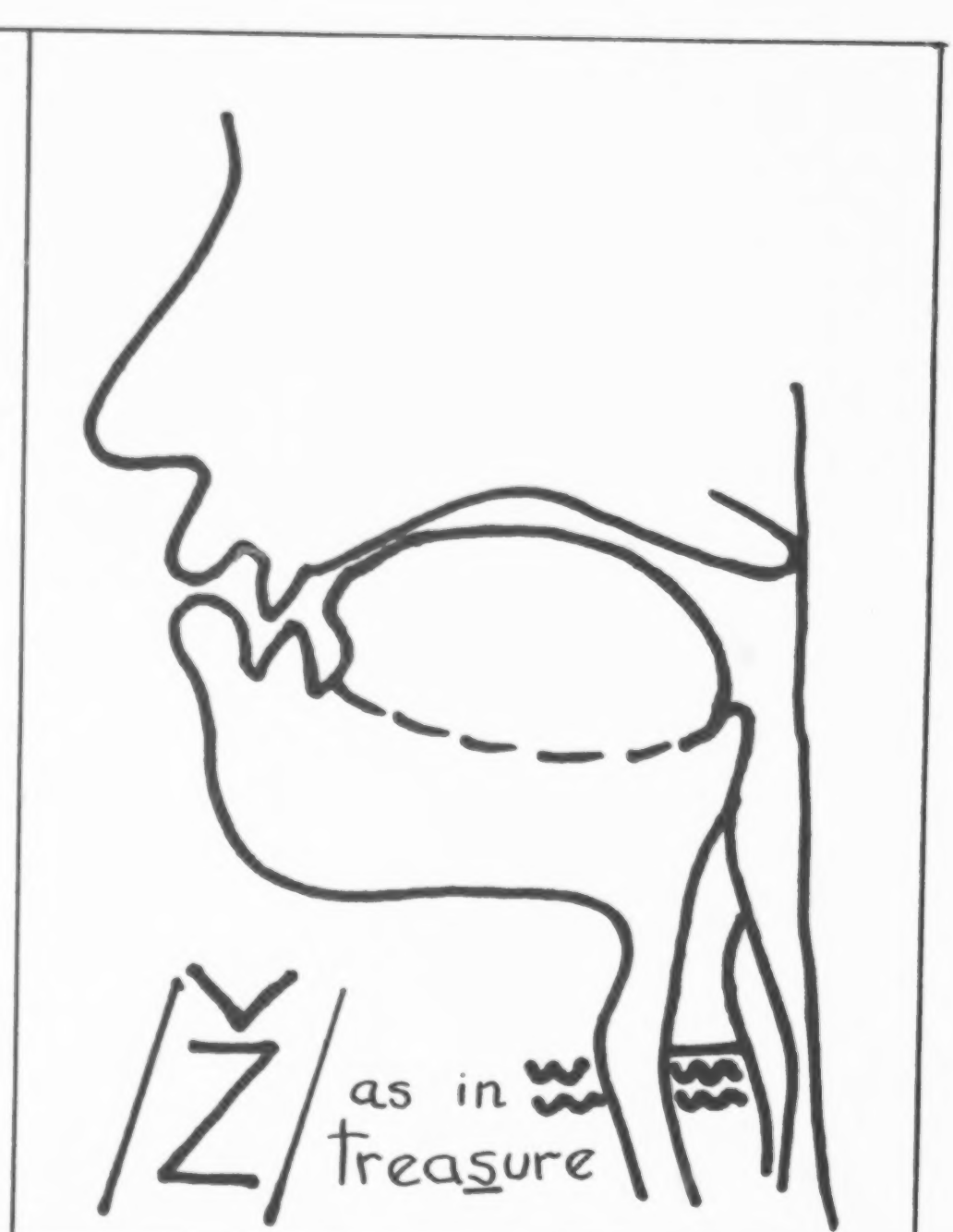
The following pairs may also be useful, though it must be noted that voicing the final consonant usually lengthens the syllabic nucleus, considerably, whether vowel or diphthong, and for Canadian English the /ay/ diphthong becomes more an /əy/ if the final sound is an unvoiced one:

e.g. ice/eyes - /əys/ vs. /ayz/
dice/dies rice/rise lice/lies
spice/spies price/prize

/s/ and /z/ as a sign of the plural or possessive:

Just as the -ed is either voiced or unvoiced depending on its environment, so the final s may represent either a /s/ or a /z/, depending on the preceding sound. Actually, this is not as complicated as it sounds. Since we find it most difficult to pronounce a voiced and an unvoiced sound together, we usually automatically make the adjustment.


/z/ as in prize


/ž/ as in treasure

A final s or 's after a voiced sound is also voiced, becoming /z/

sees goes bows dogs falls towns

Ron's Joe's Bob's

A final s after an unvoiced sound remains voiceless also:

kicks wraps clocks laughs Dick's

Kate's paints

An exception to the above pattern occurs when the -s or 's follows another sibilant like itself: /s/, /š/, /z/, /ž/ or x /ks/. Just as is the case when -ed follows a t or d, a separate syllable is used, in this case, /ɨz/.

faces dishes fusses boxes lasses

buzzes

The /ɨz/ syllable is also used when the s follows a ch or j, sounds which end in a /š/ or /ž/.

ages pages watches patches

Whether or not this pattern is taught specifically will depend on the learning level of the students, but in any case it would seem wise to include lists of these plurals and possessives in practice sessions on /s/ and /z/. Also included should be the common small words ending in s. There is no particular logic to these spellings; they just have to be memorized.

/s/ finals	/z/ finals
this	is
thus	as
us	has
yes	was
	his

Teaching /z/ and /ž/:

As is the case for some other important contrasts, it is difficult to find minimal pairs of words. However, if the pupils practice the two sounds in contrast -- /z/ /ž/ /z/ /ž/ -- noting how the tongue moves back

Common tongue positions for /l/ and /r/:

(breath escapes over sides of tongue)

(tip of tongue does not touch anything - sides slide back against the back part of the tooth ridge)

as for the /s/ and /š/ contrasts, they will be prepared to listen for the /ž/ in the following, and correct their own pronunciation should it stray to /z/.

persuasion	illusion	camouflage	rouge
measure	division	rouge	measure
treasure	usual	barrage	casual
division	pleasure	Asia	collision
precision	corsage	mirage	visual

/h/ - the glottal fricative

No particular position of tongue or lips is necessary for the production of /h/; it is simply a rush of air, a breathing sound. It is voiceless, and what sound there is, is produced by the friction of the air as it passes through the throat. /h/ should provide little difficulty to the Cree speaker as it is common in his own tongue. However, he is not used to using it as a contrastive signal in initial position. (See page 37)

/l/ and /r/

/l/ and /r/ are both voiced, continuant sounds. Since these sounds are both foreign to most Cree dialects, one might expect that they would cause some difficulty. However, both are very common in proper names used by the Indian people. French names abound in r's and l's - Ladouceur, L'Hirondelle, Desjarlais, Durocher, Delorme. Christian names of both English and French derivation provide most classrooms with plenty of familiar examples of these sounds - Ronnie, Richard, Ruth, Laurie, Louis, Alex, etc.

The production of /l/

This sound is made by letting the breath escape over one or both sides of the tongue. Normally the tip of the tongue rests against the tooth ridge, and the sides of the tongue do not touch anything. The characteristic sound of /l/ comes, though, from the movement of the tongue to or from this position. Pronounce the following slowly and carefully noting the movement from /l/ position to the next sound:

love lake like lone line leaf Lou

Pronounce the following, noting the movement toward

/l/ position:

call doll will wool fail tell pole fool

The production of /r/

The characteristic sound of /r/ also comes from the movement to or from the point of articulation. For /r/ it is the tip of the tongue that does not touch anything, and the sides move along against the back part of the tooth ridge and the back teeth. The essential feature of /r/ is a motion towards the back of the mouth. Whatever movement it may end with, it always begins with this backward motion. The tongue tip curls back a little and the edges of the tongue slide back as along two rails.

Since this characteristic backward movement of /r/ greatly affects the sound of a preceding vowel, it may be best to teach the vowel -r combinations separately, treating /r/ as a semi-vowel in these cases.

i.e. /o/ plus /r/ - /or/: for, door, floor, more shore, tore, boar

/a/ plus /r/ - /ar/: car, far, mar, tar, jar, star

/ɨ/ plus /r/ - /ɨr/: farmer, fir, fur, church, bird, tern

(pupils will learn to recognize this common sound in its three standard spellings.)

Other vowels followed by /r/ -- air, poor, and their rhyming words.

Initial /r/

Here the retroflex occurs quickly, just before the tongue moves to the following vowel position.

If the vowel is a back vowel as in words like room or roll, the tongue just moves right on back into position. If the vowel is a front one such as /iy/ as in reel or reef, the backward motion is immediately interrupted as the tongue shoots forward toward the /y/ position.

Probably, if enough common words are used in introducing /r/, there will be little difficulty, and detailed explanations would be unnecessary. But if the

Nasal Consonants

/m/ as in m̲oon

/n/ as in n̲oon n̲

/ŋ/ as in sing g̲

pupils have become interested in how sounds are made, a little time spent on analysis may enrich their experience with the /r/ sound and help them to remember it - for spelling and reading purposes.

The Nasals - /m/, /n/, and /ŋ/

For each of these sounds the escape of air from the mouth is blocked off at some point, and the air escapes through the nose, hence the term nasal. Both /m/ and /n/ are sounds very common in the Cree system, and should cause little difficulty. In the pronunciation of the /m/ sound the lips are brought together and the sound flows through the nasal passage. For /n/ the mouth passage is blocked off by pressing the tip of the tongue against the tooth ridge. These may well be described as the "humming sounds", and students could become familiar with them and their production by actually humming a song through on /n/ or /m/.

/ŋ/

With the familiar /m/ and /n/ as a background, it should be easy to present /ŋ/ as the third nasal or humming sound. /ŋ/ is made by closing off the air stream by raising the back of the tongue to press against the velum, or upper back part of the mouth -- much the same position as for /k/ or /g/, except that the nasal passage is opened and the sound is a continual one flowing through the nose rather than the mouth. It is a little more difficult to hum using the /ŋ/ sound, but should prove to be lots of fun for the class.

Though /ŋ/ is not a Cree phoneme it is sometimes heard as a variation of /n/ in initial position, especially in the elisions common to normal rapid speech. Perhaps some contrasts with other sounds produced in the same tongue position will help to emphasize the unique quality of /ŋ/:

Pronounce columns down and then across

/k/	/ŋ/
tuck	tongue
kick	king
thick	thing
rick	ring
brick	bring

/k/	/ŋ/
stick	sting
stuck	stung
luck	lung

Or:

/g/	/ŋ/
tug	tongue
rig	ring
bag	bang
rag	rang
tag	tang
lug	lung
rug	rung

It is important that the student realize that he is not trying to make a <u>voicing</u> distinction in these drills (both sounds are voiced); he is rather distinguishing between the velar stop, released through the mouth, and the velar nasal sound, released through the nose. Another difference, of course, is that /ŋ/ is a continuant sound and can be pronounced in isolation - or prolonged, while /k/ or /g/ cannot be prolonged, but occur momentarily only.

<u>Other words for practising the final /ŋ/</u>:

King sing thing ring fling wing bring

strong bang sting rang song

<u>/y/ and /w/</u>

Both these sounds are familiar to Cree speakers. Since they often occur as semi-vowels, they have been introduced with the vowels in this booklet. (See pages 41,54)

<u>A Familiar Sound in an Unfamiliar Environment</u>

We are sitting in our desks. The teacher walks to the front of the room, smiles, and begins, "Our new words for today are <u>mpeed</u>, <u>ktain</u>, and <u>nger</u>." Almost impossible, aren't they!

Yet the initial sound cluster in each word is one

familiar to English. We have no problem with camp, act or sing. Place these final sound clusters in initial position, however, and they immediately become foreign.

But, if the teacher will only let us put a vowel sound in front of each of those awkward words, we can make them into perfectly respectable English: impede, octane, and singer. The familiar sounds in question are now in familiar territory, and cause us no discomfort whatever.

There are, likewise, some sounds in Cree which, although familiar in one position, are foreign in another. The following chart is arranged to show where each sound usually occurs in Cree.

Initial Position	Between Vowels	Final Position
a. Consonant Sounds		
p, t, č, k, m, n	p, t, č, k, m, n	p, t, č, k m, n
(ŋ)-in contracted forms	(ŋ)	---
s, š (Eastern dialect)	s, (š)	s, (š)
l (Moose Cree)	(l)	(l)
y	y	y
w	w	w
---	h	---
b. Consonant Clusters		
---	sk, (šk), sč	sk
---	skw, (škw)	---
---	sp, st	---
kw	kw	---
pw	pw	---
šw	sw, (šw)	---
tw	tw	---
nt, nk, nč,	nt	---
mp	mp	---
c. Pre-aspirates		
---	ht hč, hk, hn hl, hp, hkw, hw	ht, hč, hk, hp

The blanks in the preceding chart are of most interest to us as we teach English words to Cree-oriented pupils. What sounds in English will be out of place, and thus foreign?

1. Final /ŋ /

2. Initial or final /h/

Final /h/ sounds are unimportant in English too. Not so, however, with the initial /h/ (e.g. pairs such as ate, hate; as, has; owl, howl.) You will sometimes hear Cree speakers adding or subtracting an initial /h/. This is permissible in their own language. For instance, the Cree name for an owl is oho, and may be pronounced hoho with no change in meaning.

3. Initial /sk/

Just as we have great difficulty pronouncing mpeed or nger without inserting a vowel sound before the /mp/ or the /ŋ /, Crees tend to precede the /sk/ by a vowel sound such as /i/ (e.g. pronouncing school as ischool). Even the word squaw is our corruption of the Cree word /iskwew/ (woman). Granted, the initial /i/ is not stressed, but it is there.

4. Initial or final /sp/ or /st/

It is my experience that the final position here is the one causing the most difficulty. The distinction is lost between such words as pass and past. Pupils often need to be taught to hear and pronounce that final /t/. The final /sp/ is not so common in English, but does occur in such words as wasp, whisp, and grasp.

5. Neither Cree nor English uses in final position a cluster ending in /w/

6. English does not make use of pre-aspiration as a meaning signal. It is important in Cree, however, and those of us who are trying to learn Cree soon need to train ourselves to hear and pronounce that puff of air before a consonant.

7. /nt/, /nk/, /nč/ and /mp/

These clusters, so common in English when preceded by a vowel, occur in Cree only in initial or medial position. Especially when these sounds occur in final

position in English, will care be needed to see that Cree students hear and pronounce the final consonant.

Perhaps you have received notes from parents similar to this: "I am sorry John can come to school today. He is sick." In pronouncing our English can't, we lengthen the vowel. To the Cree ear, it is likely this factor, not the final /t/, that makes can distinguishable from can't. In speech, too, they may often disregard this final /t/.

Since words ending in a "consonant-t" combination are especially common in English, this particular combination will have to be taught carefully. Many verbs form their past tense this way, though spelling does not indicate this. e.g. washed - /waštˇ/
splashed - /splæštˇ/
fished - /fištˇ/

Drill Suggestions

Initial h as a contrastive sound:

ate	hate
arm	harm
as	has
at	hat
owl	howl
old	hold
and	hand
am	ham
all	hall
ill	hill
it	hit

He has as many hats as Harry has.

This is his _____.

This is her _____.

and other sentences using his, her and him in normal conversational sequence.

The Cree-ism, "John, his hat" or "John 'is hat" is a direct translation of the Cree possessive form.

However, since Cree speakers tend to ignore or drop the initial /h/ in his and since acceptable English demands "'s" or "es'" it takes a while before they realize that the English form is not "John his hat" or "The horse his tail", as it would be in Cree.

Drills for troublesome final clusters:

/s/	/st/
pass	passed
loss	lost
lass	last
mass	mast
Tess	test
Bess	best
boss	bossed
confess	confessed
dress	dressed
kiss	kissed
miss	missed
fuss	fussed
bus	bussed
face	faced
lace	laced
trace	traced
ice	iced
price	priced

Sentence patterns:

(I) passed by the (store)
(I) passed (my) test.
(I) missed the bus.
He had the most _____.
(I) lost my _____.
_____came in last.
The _____ is best of all.

n/nt

can	can't
plan	plant
Ann	aunt
pan	pant
ten	tent
pain	paint

Patterns to check on the final /nt/:

(I) spent _____ when I went to the store.
Can you (_____)?
No, (I) can't _____ or (Yes, I can).
(I) won't _____.
Did (you) paint it (red)?

s/st

wash	washed
splash	splashed
cash	cashed
dish	dished
wish	wished
dash	dashed
fish	fished
push	pushed
rush	rushed

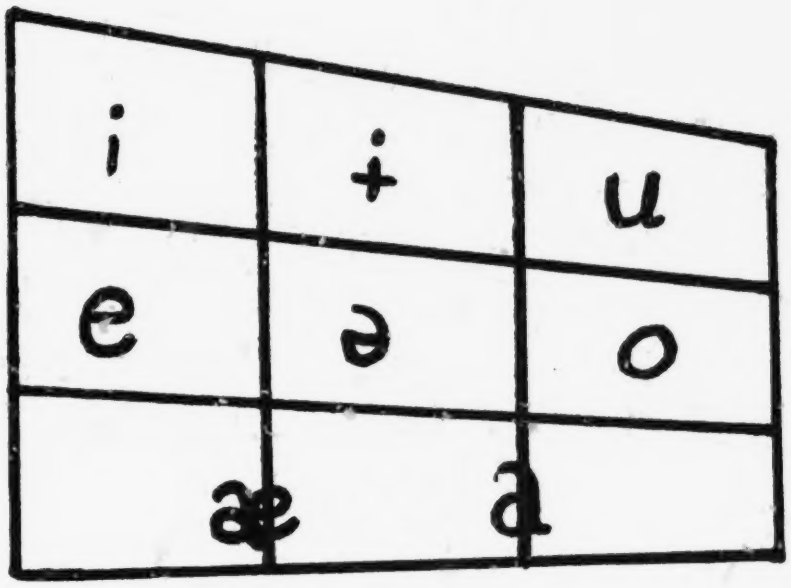
Sentence patterns for the final /$\overset{y}{s}$t/:

Who pushed you? _____pushed me.
He splashed the water when he washed his hands.
Where did (you) fish? (I) fished in (Trout Lake).
(My mother) washed (the clothes).

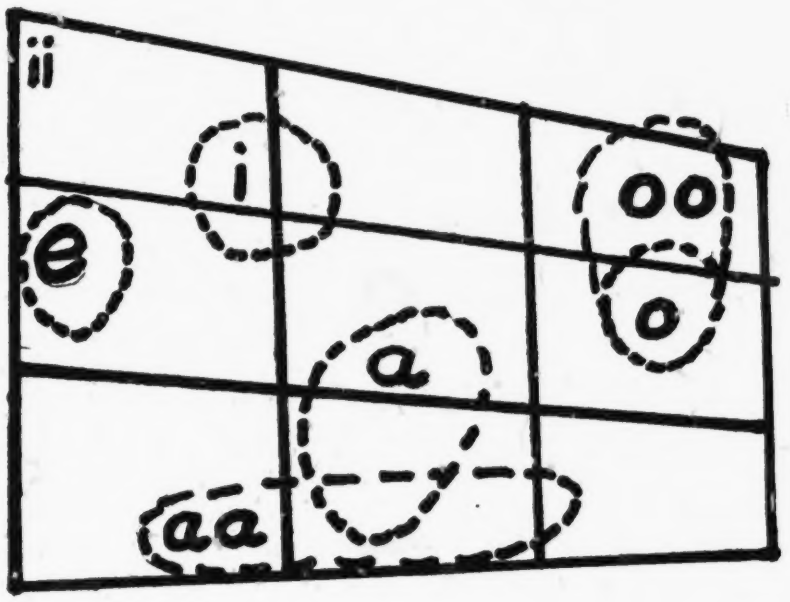
Sequence:

"What do you wish?"
"I wish I could _____"
"What did _____ wish?"
"He wished he could _____".

English Vowels



Cree Vowels



VOWELS - CREE AND ENGLISH

In the following material, a doubled letter indicates a lengthened vowel.

Variation in vowel length is a feature just as important in Cree as stress is in English. e.g. pérmit/ permít or óbject/objéct. In Cree (and in many other languages) a "long" vowel means quite literally a vowel held for a somewhat longer duration than is a "short" one. (This lengthened vowe! sound is not to be confused with what English speakers call the "long vowel"; that term is often used by teachers of primary phonics to refer to a syllable nucleus which may be written with a vowel symbol but is actually a diphthong.

e.g. hate - /heyt/

like - /ləyk/

use - /yuwz/

Actually lengthened vowel sounds do occur in English as well as Cree, especially before a voiced consonant. e.g. Compare the vowel length in neat and need, or in rip and rib. This variation in English is not important to the meaning of the word and usually passes unnoticed by the English speaker. However, in Cree, such a lengthening of the vowel sound would be important to the meaning intended.

The most important factor in the pronunciation of vowels is the position of the highest part of the tongue. It can be toward the front of the mouth or further back. It may also be high in the mouth, or relatively low. The chart opposite shows the tongue position for the vowels of Cree and English.

Teaching Suggestions Based on a Comparison of English and Cree Vowels

English /i/ and /iy/ vs. Cree /i/ and /ii/

The Cree /i/ is similar to the English, except that it is usually produced a little lower and further back in the mouth. Often in unstressed positions it seems to disappear altogether in normal speech, especially in ni - the prefix indicating first person in verbs and in possessive forms, e.g. ninisitohten (I understand it) is usually pronounced more like n's'tohten. However the short /i/ in Cree contrasts with the lengthend /ii/, which is produced much higher and more forward in the mouth and is similar to our /iy/ as in eat. The Cree sound does not usually

move into the /y/ glide, though, as does English - except when it is followed immediately by a /y/ sound, as in kiiya, (you). To develop a good English pronunciation of /iy/, it may be helpful to teach and contrast the sounds /i/ and /iy/.

/i/

Begin with a common example, such as the word bit. Have the pupils pronounce after you:

bit bit bit bit bi bi bi i i i i i

thus gradually isolating the vowel sound. This is strictly an exercise in listening and accurate reproduction of the sound; use no written words at this stage.

Next have the children pronounce after you other words containing the vowel /i/, listening for this sound in each word.

bit fix pin if it ink lift kiss

ring trip win hill

Follow by repeating phrases contining this sound:

this city which gift six inches

swift kick a quick finish to visit my sister

/iy/

Begin by presenting the /y/ sound: pronounce:

yank young yellow yes yet yoke

yell yawn

Have the students notice the position of their tongues as each word begins (/y/ is always produced by a movement away from or toward the high front sector of the mouth.)

Now isolate the /iy/ sound and draw attention to the similar movement at the end of this sound.

Have the students pronounce after you:

beet beet beet beet bee bee bee ee ee ee ee

Then the two sounds as follows:

bit beet bit beet bit beet bi bee bi bee

bi bee i ee i ee i ee i ee

dip deep dip deep dip deep di dee di dee

di dee di dee i ee i ee i ee i ee

(N.B. It is important here to be aware of the fact that when /iy/ precedes a voiced consonant it is lengthened. i.e. the /iy/ in bead is longer than the /iy/ in beat. Since English does not use this variation in length to distinguish between two different meanings, the teacher will consider these vowel sounds identical - and they are, for our purposes. However, since vowel length is a significant feature in Cree, it may be a good idea to include among the examples for /iy/ words with both voiced and unvoiced finals.)

seeds peach heat sneeze meat treat cheat

lead key me see bee He's neat. Eat some meat.

Feed the bees. That's cheap. Let me see the key.

More /i/ vs. /iy/ contrasts:

sit/seat	fit/feet	sill/seal
dip/deep	hip/heap	still/steal
his/he's	mitt/meat	rip/reap
fist/feast	pill/peal	bin/bean
hit/heat	slip/sleep	rid/read

/iy/ in initial, medial and final positions:

Beginning	End	Middle
equal	three	mean
even	knee	green
easy	agree	read
eastern	sea	week
evil	tea	least

a deep sleep a free people reaching either tree three Cree preachers keeping these keys reason to eat the least These teachers can't speak Cree. We drank tea under the trees. Sleep, sleep, sleep - what a sleepyhead! Please teach me.

/i/	/iy/
it	eat
fill	feel
live	leave

/i/	/iy/
sin	seen
wick	week
rich	reach
itch	each

/iy/ is produced with more muscular effort and tenseness. Place the fingers under the fleshy part of the chin. Pronounce iy iy iy - note the pressure. Contrast with /i/:

i iy i iy i iy i iy i iy

Choose the right word: (pupils identify the word that was used)

ship	sheep	I saw the ship yesterday.
live	leave	He will leave here this summer.
fill	feel	Come and feel this cup.
slip	sleep	He doesn't want to slip.

Or use two words in one sentence:

The shoes fit my feet.

He's doing his work.

The dog ate his meat, then started chewing on my mitt.

Last week we bought a new wick for our lamp.

There are several ways to use this type of exercise:

The teacher can pronounce the sentence, and the student point to the word or words as they are used.
Pupils can take turns reading the sentences - and pointing out the contrasting words.

If the sentences listed are such that either word would fit, depending on the context, the teacher could provide a suitable setting, and the students say the sentence that would fit.

e.g. slip sleep Maybe Johnny will _____.

Johnny is your little brother. You are riding home in the car. Maybe Johnny will _____.

Your little brother is climbing up onto the hood of the car. Maybe Johnny will _____.

The chief value of such exercises as this is not, of course, to teach the lexical meaning of words. In fact, the students must understand the vocabulary in order to respond intelligently. The value for him is that he is forced to pronounce carefully in order to avoid confusion of meaning. He has practiced the sounds in order to imitate well: now he pronounces well in order to be able to communicate.

/e/ and /ey/

The Cree sound /e/ is produced similarily to the English, but is placed a little further forward in the mouth. To the English-trained ear, it may sound like an /ey/. (Try eliminating the /y/ glide from some familiar words involving in /ey/ -- pay, take, ache. If you seem to have acquired a Cree accent, you have been pronouncing a sound similar to the Cree /e/). In order that the Cree student may properly distinguish between /e/ and /ey/ in his reading and spelling work, as well as in his pronunciation of English, it may be well to use some drills which will fix these two sounds as distinct.

/e/ - hearing and pronouncing the sound

Begin by pronouncing

bed bed bed bed bed bed bed

Now repeat, with the same vowel sound, but without the final consonant

be_ be_ be_ be_ be_ be_ be_

Now, the vowel sound only

_e_ _e_ _e_ _e_ _e_ _e_ _e_

Try to encourage a production that is a little more relaxed than the Cree /e/, and this will likely bring it back enough to approximate the English sound.

Pronounce the following carefully, drawing attention to the middle sound in each:

step ten leg press next length fresh

egg end edge sent a red head

several presents her best dress when I left

Hearing the contrast between /e/ and /ey/:

Pronounce fell/fail fell/fail fell/fail

Isolate and practice the /ey/ sound as in fail:
It begins like /e/ and glides into /y/ -- practice:

/ey/ ey ey ey ey ey ey ey ey
pay say great ate age rain laid wait
paint plays lay them straight a date at eight
the baby's name he made me late

Pronounce the following pairs of words, listening for the /e/ and the /ey/. The first word has an /e/ vowel in it, the second word an /ey/:

sell/sale dell/dale shell /shale bet/bait
get/gate dead/day debt/date bed/bay head/hay
get/gate test/taste rest/raced let/late
bled/blade men/main edge/age

Sentences for practice of contrasting words:

My hand <u>bled</u> where the <u>blade</u> cut it.
What do you <u>bet</u> that fox stole the <u>bait</u>?
When will you <u>get</u> the new <u>gate</u> made?
After we <u>raced</u>, we all had a <u>rest</u>.

In bringing out these and the contrasts in the words listed above the student will be forced to stress the /y/ glide, and this is the practice he needs.

<u>/i/ and /e/</u>

Another contrast that may prove even more difficult than the above is the one between the vowel in <u>bid</u> and the vowel in <u>bed</u>. These are both short sounds, so the length will not help in keeping them apart, as it undoubtedly does in the /i/ and /iy/ contrast or the /e/ and /ey/. Both /i/ and /e/ exist phonetically in Cree, but are simply variants of a single short vowel that covers about the same range as the two vowels /i/ and /e/ in English. This means that Cree speakers are deeply conditioned not to hear any difference between the two sounds and of course this causes trouble when they occur as contrastive signals in English.

The following drill list may help to fix the difference between /i/ and /e/. Drill down each column until the vowel sound is familiar. Then drill across, to

emphasize the contrasts.

bit	bet
bid	bed
hid	head
Dick	deck
pick	peck
will	well
slipped	slept
did	dead

It may help in this contrast to note that the tongue and the jaw are a little higher for /i/ than for /e/. Contrast the sounds and place a finger under the chin to feel it drop for the /e/ sound. It may be profitable for the pupils to use this method with the above word drill.

Sentence contrasts will help to build an association between sound contrasts and meaning differences:

I slipped on the floor.

I slept on the floor.

Did he pick the berries?

Did he peck the berries?

You dropped a pin on the floor.

You dropped a pen on the floor.

I broke the lid.

I broke the lead.

All of the above examples would lend themselves well to illustration. If picture cards were used, one person (teacher or pupil) could pronounce a sentence while another chose the right picture. Or one could choose a picture while the other read or recited the appropriate sentence.

A phonic spelling exercise would be a good check on how well the students had grasped the /i/ and /e/ contrast. Fortunately, these sounds are spelled fairly regularly in English. The spelling test could be conducted as follows (no time being given to pupil preparation.)

"Here are some words that have an /i/ sound and some words that have an /e/ sound. If the sound

is /i/ in any of these words, the letter you will need to use is i. If the sound is /e/, you will need to use e."

men tent tint mint sin pen left

lift pit rip vet bled rid

(A list like this should include at least some words that the pupils do not know and could not have memorized.)

/æ/

The /æ/ sound is made another step lower in the mouth than in the /e/. /i/, /e/ and /æ/ are all "front vowels", produced well forward in the mouth. /i/ is the highest, /e/ next, and /æ/ the lowest of all.

Review the /i/ vs. /e/ contrast, stressing the lowering of the jaw for /e/:

lid lid lid lid lid li li li li i i i i

led led led led led le le le le e e e e

lid led lid led lid li le li le i e i e

Now add a third word and notice how it is different from the first two:

lid led lad

Now isolate the vowel sounds:

i e a

i e a

i e a

Feel how the jaw drops lower yet for the third sound - /æ/.

Pronounce the following sets of three, noting the same feature --

bit	bet	bat
did	dead	dad
hid	head	had
miss	mess	mass
big	beg	bag
pick	peck	pack
slipped	slept	slapped

Practice the third column, and other /æ/ words;[1]

back bank plant rag wag glad pass sad
ask act can fast as path past family
half a glass faster and faster and faster
a happy dancer

Other drills to teach the contrasts between the front vowels, /iy/, /i/, /ey/, /e/, and /æ/.

(1)	/ey/	/e/	/æ/
	bait	bet	bat
	pain	pen	pan
	bake	beck	back
	laid	led	lad
	lace	less	lass
	shale	shell	shall

(2)	/iy/	/i/	/e/
	feel	fill	fell
	bead	bid	bed
	heed	hid	head
	least	list	lest
	deed	did	dead
	dean	din	den
	peak	pick	peck

/æ/ and /a/

From the Cree vowel chart we see that there are two important Cree sounds pronounced in the area of the mouth which English speakers use for articulation of the three sounds, /ə/, /æ/, and /a/, as in cut, cat, and caught. Most analyses of English vowels would add a fourth vowel, /ɔ/ to show a contrast between cot - /kat/ and caught - /kɔt/.

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[1] Use only examples that you as teacher pronounce with /æ/. British speakers will use /a/ as in father for some of these words.

The following lists illustrate the difference intended here:

/a/: not, rot, sot, body, hock, nod

/ɔ/: nought, wrought, sought, bawdy, hawk, gnawed

For many Canadian speakers, the differences between these words are either non-existent, or so slight that it would hardly seem worthwhile to include this contrast among those to be taught to Cree youngsters. The /ɔ/ words often have a slightly longer vowel sound -- like /ah/. However for our purposes, it would seem best to consider the two sounds as variations of the one phoneme, /a/.

As the Cree long vowel /aa/ moves back in the mouth, it often sounds more like our /a/. This /aa/ contrasts with the short sound, /a/ in Cree, with a pronunciation ranging from our /ə/ to /a/ or even /æ/. It would seem, then, that some practice in distinguishing between the English /ə/ and /a/ would be helpful.

<u>/ə/</u>

Students may remember the /ə/ sound best as a sound rather like the one you make if you are suddenly punched in the stomach.

Pronounce it a few times with the class, then use the following words to emphasize this sound and teach them to hear it in words:

up us sun cup bun come run young of love

money jump punch hum lung hunt rub brush

mother tongue ugly duckling young love

Pronounce groups of three words to the class, and have them identify and pronounce the one word with an /ə/ sound e.g. sing sang <u>sung</u>; soon, <u>sun</u>, sin.

<u>/a/</u>

/a/ is the most open vowel sound, the lips are rounded and relaxed and the jaw drops considerably.

Pronounce	fox	fox	fox	fox
	-ox	-ox	-ox	-ox
	-o-	-o-	-o-	-o-

drop clock god lot talk saw pots all off cross

salt doll top to bottom walk across to the shop
a soft cloth a long box

Contrasts between /a/ and /ə/:

pop	pup	pop	pup	pop	pup
-o-	-u-	-o-	-u-	-o-	-u-

Drill lists for pronunciation practice and as a source for words to contrast in sentences and listening games:

/ə/ vs. /a/:

hut / hot	nut / not
but / bought	done / Don
cut / caught	run / Ron
stuck / stock	puck / pock
cup / cop	cub / cob
shut / shot	rub / rob
cluck / clock	duck / dock
luck / lock	one / wan

/æ/ vs. /ə/:

hat / hut	back / buck
cat / cut	sack / suck
bat / but	tack / tuck
cap / cup	match / much

/o/ and /u/ - the back vowels

The two Cree back vowels are the short and the lengthened /o/, both of these sounds being pronounced in a position nearer to the English /u/ as in look. The /u/ sound in English is pronounced as a pure vowel, but one very seldom hears a pure /o/. The sound occurs in the colloquial "gonna", and as the first sound in diphthongs such as the /ow/ in hope and the /oy/ in coin. The /u/ sound also occurs often in diphthong-like combination with /w/ - /uw/ as in boot. In summary, it would seem that the important sounds to teach are /ow/, /u/, and /uw/.

Although /ow/ usually has a /w/ glide at the end, it may be simpler just to present it as the sound we

make with our mouth like an "o" - and in fact, the name of that particular letter. Perhaps the first practice words could be those that <u>end</u> in an /ow/ sound, as pronunciation of these will emphasize the glide into a /w/ sound. Then if the same sound is used in middle or initial position, a more English sound will be produced.

Practice the sound in isolation, noting the rounding of the mouth, and how the tongue moves back.

/ow/ /ow/ /ow/ /ow/

go no so bow flow doe toe hoe show mow

though know low

The /ow/ sound at the beginning of words:

old open over obey ocean oak only

The /ow/ sound as a middle sound:

bone home hope coat goat nose rose cold

pole boat roast toast most

Mixed practice:

There's smoke coming out of that hole.

Those snowshoe tracks go close to his home.

Tie your pony to this old post.

<u>Contrast /ə/ and /ow/</u>

fun	/	phone	cut	/	coat
bun	/	bone	come	/	comb
hum	/	home	puck	/	poke
nut	/	note	rub	/	robe
run	/	roan			

<u>/u/</u>

This may be described to children as the sound they make when they push something, and, incidentally, also the vowel sound in the words <u>push</u> and <u>pull</u>. Perhaps it would fix this sound in pupils' minds if they push their hands against their desk as they make the sound in the fist practice session.

*push push push u u u u

*(Watch here that the final sound is /s̆/, not /s/.)

Now have them pronounce the following words after you and if they are pronouncing the /u/ sound, push against their desk (- or, if the desk would move, have them push some imaginary heavy object.)

look pull could cook book should woman

foot good bush wool wolf nook hood

Put some sugar in.

This is a good book.

Look at the woman.

She could cook.

Contrasting /ow/ and /u/ sounds

Younger students would enjoy some action which would help them to distinguish the two sounds, or indicate that they had recognized the required sound. Perhaps they could push, or pretend to push, something when saying or hearing the /u/, and form a large "o" with their fingers, when hearing or saying the /ow/ sound.

First, simple practice:

Coke cook Coke cook /ow/ /u/

Then pronounce each word after the teacher, indicating which vowel sound was used:

took broke brook goad good put hope

told should showed mold

/uw/

The /uw/ sound is made similarly to /u/, but the lips are extended and rounded in "whistling position". The tip of the tongue touches nothing, but the back of the tongue is raised and touches the velum. It is a /u/ sound gliding into a /w/ sound. Cree speakers pronouncing English /uw/ may tend to omit this /w/ sound and produce a sound more like their familiar /oo/ (lengthened /o/). Again it is in final position that this /w/ sound is most conspicuous; so the first practice could well be on words that will use the /uw/ in final position.

too too too too who who who who coo coo coo

true glue shoe blue Sue

Then strive for the same /uw/ sound in the following:

tools spool school goose loose choose fruit
boot noon spoon
a loose tooth through the school whose shoe
a blue moon move into the room

/u/ vs. /uw/:

pull	pool
full	fool
wood	wooed
could	cooed
look	Luke

/ə/ vs. /uw/:

spun	spoon
sun	soon
dumb	doom
but	boot
skull	school
rush	roost

/ə/ vs. /u/:

buck	book
luck	look
putt	put
cud	could

/uw/ vs. /ow/:

spook	spoke
choose	chose
flew	flow
shoe	show
blew	blow
cool	coal
rule	roll

/a/, /ow/ and /uw/:

flaw	flow	flew
Shaw	show	shoe
saw	so	Sue
bought	boat	boot
call	coal	cool
Paul	pole	pool
lawn	loan	loon

/yuw/

Sometimes the /uw/ sound is preceded by a /y/ sound as in the name for the letter "u":

use unite few feud cute,

and sometimes in words like tune, dune, new, dew, - the pronunciation varies here with individuals, but the teacher should normally teach the pronunciation he himself uses.

Vowel sounds that glide into a /w/ sound

Review the glide into /w/ position that often occurs at the end of the /uw/ and /ow/ sounds.

First concentrate on the /w/ sound itself, noting how the lips are rounded in producing this sound, and

the tongue moves toward the high back part of the mouth. (Contrast with the /y/ sound, where tongue movement was toward the high front part of the mouth.) Practice a few words with an initial /w/ in order to note how the /w/ is produced.

water wait wind well winter wish wall

window willow

Note that the last two words end almost as they began -- in /w/ position.
Pronounce several /ow/ words to review this feature:

snow though throw gold road

Notice the same feature in the following /uw/ words:

shoe do moon blue

There is another vowel sound that ends in a /w/ glide.[1] It begins like the /a/ in box and glides into /w/ position.

Listen to the vowel sound in - vowel and in sound, in owl and in round. The /aw/ sound can be explained as the sound we often say if something hurts, "Ow!"

Practice, listening for this sound in:

cow how found proud count loud

"How now, brown cow?"

Practice the three sounds that glide into a /w/ sound:

/aw/ /uw/ and /ow/ repeat several times until quality is good.

Then follow each repetition with three words that illustrate these sounds - in the same order.

e.g. /aw/ /uw/ /ow/, bounce boom bolt cow coo cold

down do dough; found food fold; mouse moon most;

sound soon so; mouth moose most; how who ho!

(Since the /aw/ combination is a common word ending in Cree, it should present little difficulty; however, careful attention to how it is produced may help the student to improve his pronunciation of the other /w/ glides, where he is not used to adding a /w/ sound in his own language.)

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[1] Most Canadian speakers also use a glide from /ə/ to /w/ in many words. e.g. house - /həws/, out - /əwt/. This could be presented as a separate sound, or as a variation of the /aw/ phoneme that commonly occurs before voiceless consonants.

Two other diphthongs - /oy/ and /ay/

Review the final glide to a /y/ position as illustrated in the practice sessions for /iy/ and /ey/. Note the initial sounds, (/i/ and /e/) and how they glide into /y/ position.

e.g. contrast bit and beat, i and ea - noting how the second sound begins like /i/ and changes to /y/.

Contrast get and gate, again noting how the second sound begins like the first, but adds a /y/ sound.

Introduce the /ay/ sound as in fine. It begins like /a/, but immediately changes to /y/.

fine ride shine side time mile shy fry

sky die etc.

The easy way to remember the sound is that it is a word in itself, "I", and also the name of the letter "i".

The following drill will give practice in pronouncing and distinguishing between three sounds ending in a /y/ sound - /iy/, /ey/ and /ay/. Drill down these columns before drilling across.

/iy/	/ey/	/ay/
deal	dale	dial
feel	fail	file
speed	spade	spied
read	raid	ride
real	rale	rile
bead	bayed	bide
wheel	whale	while
knee	nay	nigh
lead	laid	lied
steal	stale	style
team	tame	time

/oy/

Another diphthong ending in a /y/ glide is /oy/. It begins like /ow/, but instead of a backward movement of the

tongue, with lip rounding, towards /w/, there is a movement up and forward -- into /y/ position.

Pronounce the following words, noting the /oy/ sound in each:

oil boy joy Roy coin boil loyal destroy

Review and contrast of the four vowel sounds ending in /y/:

/iy/	/ey/	/ay/	/oy/
deal	dale	dial	dolly
feel	fail	file	foil
be	bay	by	boy
see	say	sigh	soy
teal	tale	tile	toil
keen	cane	kine	coin
lead	laid	lied	loiter
reel	rail	rile	Roy

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